


HISTORY OF THAI LITERATURE



by M.L. MANICH JUMSAI



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HISTORY OF THAI LITERATURE

including Laos, Shans, Khamti

Ahom and Yunnan-Nanchao

by

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PREFACE

The chapter on Thailand's literature during the days of Sukothai in the 13th century may be nothing extraordinary since most of it is already known by many. These materials, however, have scarcely been translated into Western languages. The one written in French by Mr. Schweisguth and edited by M Adrien Maisonneuve has long been out of print. There exist however scores of literature belonging to other tribes such as the Ahoms (in Assam), the Shans (in northern Burma), the Laotians who live as far north as Yunnan or Tongking in the east. The Ahoms have made more headway than any other Thai tribes in the recording of their chronicles from beginning to end. Compared to the literature belonging to other Thai tribes, theirs is no less richer. These stories written in longhand have been kept together in a collection. These old books are kept in monasteries, by headmen of distant villages, and are quite often passed on through narration from one generation to the next. Men of old in this region already had some knowledge of making paper from the bark of mulberry trees (ton sah), but since they had no printing facilities, the stories had to be written by hand on the mulberry papers. The papers are then folded up like an accordion so that they may be easily stored away. Some of these old books had been taken away by researchers, adding to their collection of books in their library back in Europe. Some, however,

were left in villages where they were difficult to get to due to a lack of communication means with the outside world. As a result of unpeaceful political conditions during the course of these areas which resulted in civil war after World War II, it was suspected that these books may have been destroyed along with the burnt down villages. For example, the Thai Dam people (Black Thai) were very much affected by these wars and many of them had to leave their original home in Northern Vietnam (around the area of Dien-Bien-Phu, the Muang Theng of the chronicles or the Sibsong Chutai area in Thai history), to come and settle down in various places. These included Muang Ou, Phongsaly, Samneua, Luang Prabang and even just outside Vientiane on the way to Vang Vieng. Many of these people had also moved to Vientiane for their own safety. But how much of their ancient literature has been saved, I really cannot tell.

During my long services with the international organization (1950-1968), I was constantly sent on missions to India (Assam), Burma, Shan States, Laos and Vietnam. It was in these places that I had the opportunity to integrate with the village people, learning something new from time to time from conversations with the old men and chief monks of each village. I was appointed expert of textbooks from 1958-1960 in Laos where I worked very closely with the Literary Committee of the Ministry of Education and other learned men in Laos. I have thus been able to collect some rare old documents and managed to jot down stories which they have told me. It has been some time since I left these countries and some of the notes which I took then are either lost or illegible even to my-

self. It really has been a long time and therefore difficult to recollect every single thing in detail, so now is the best time to record as much as I can in print before I forget them all.

Since the literature of the Thais is so rich, my attempt is simply to gather them together in one collection. I therefore hope that others will find occasion to hunt for more materials in order to complete the collection before all these old manuscripts are gone and lost with future wars. I have been lucky enough to be able to visit the Shan States as well as Laos before civil war broke out. When I was appointed UN expert to Laos, the country had not yet been divided into two political factions as it is today. I was therefore able to visit all the provincial towns and outlying villages right up to the border of Yunnan in the north and as far as the Thai Dam and Thai Deng territory in the east. At present, it is not possible to do this anymore because these regions are occupied by Pathet Laos and are no longer under government control.

March 1992

The History of Thai Literature

(including that of the Laotians, the Shans, the Ahoms and the Khamtis)

Historical Background

The Thais inhabited southern China as early as the beginning of the Christian era, from where they infiltrated southwards towards the north of Burma, Tonking and along the Mekong River into the southeast region, which was then under Khmer domination.

In 729, King Piloko united the six Thai kingdoms of Yunnan and established the kingdom of Nanchao with the capital of Talifu, called Nong-She by the Thais. This kingdom lasted until 1253 when Kublai Khan invaded Nanchao and annexed her to China ever since.

A group of Thais emigrated into the south into Burma, where they formed the Shan branch of the Thai group. In the early days, they built Muong Pong (now called Mogaung), then Hsenwi and finally Keng-Tung in the Shan States. These were the Shan branch of the Thai group which controlled the northern part of Burma, and especially strongly over the rest of Burma. In 1228, a branch of the Shans crossed over the Paktoi Range of Mountains, past Assam and established a kingdom known as Ahom which lasted to the days when Assam was still annexed by the British. In 1287, after the fall of Pagan, three Shan brothers seized control of upper Burma.

Another branch of the Thais which streamed down the Mekong River had established two more kingdoms in the south. The Chiengsen Kingdom which emerged into a more modern king-

dom of Lannathai, with the capital of Chiengrai, then at Chiengmai, was built by King Mengrai in 1296 and Chiengtung or Keng-Tung, which King Mengrai built in 1262. Another kingdom was the Kingdom of Luang Prabang established by the son of Piloko, known as Khun Lo, in 737. Luang Prabang is now the capital of modern day Laos. In Tongking, there was another Thai group who had settled down there as early as the seventh century A.D. who overtook Hainan in 667 and then Hanoi in 862. The people who dominated this area were known as the Black Thais, White Thais and Red Thais, whose capitals were Lai-Chau and Dien-Bien-Phu (Muong Theng in Thai). Their country is known as Sibsong Chutai, once ruled by twelve Thai chieftains. This part of the territory is now in northern Vietnam.

There was another Thai group who had penetrated more towards the south into the Chao Phrya River basin, a territory which was under the Khmer empire. In 1238, this Thai group under Khun Pha Muong and Khun Bangklangtao revolted against the Khmers and took Sukothai as its kingdom, ruled now by Bangklangtao. This kingdom lasted until 1378 when it was annexed by the southern Thai kingdom of Ayudhya which became the new Thai kingdom from Farnag in Lannathai. When Farnag was attacked and burnt down by the Shans in the thirteenth century, Prince Chaisiri of Chiengsen led his men towards the south and finally came to settle down at Uthong. It was not until one of his descendants married the daughter of Prince Uthong that he went to establish a new city at Nong Sanoh, situated opposite Ayudhya in 1350. This new kingdom of Ayudhya lasted until 1767, when it was destroyed by the

Burmese. One of the Thai generals, Taksin, who fled from Ayudhya, had led his men to drive away the Burmese troops from his country, but discovered that Ayudhya was uninhabitable. He therefore established a new city at Dhonburi, located just opposite Bangkok. When he one day became insane, one of his generals, Chakri, assumed power as King in 1782 and established Bangkok, which became the capital of modern Thailand up to this day.

The use of Thai alphabets

We see from the above summary of Thai history of over a period of 2000 years that the first Thais in Yunnan of Nanchao were broken up into several groups and had come into contact with the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Burmese, the Indians (in Assam) and the Khmers. As the Thais were great assimilators wherever they went they would adopt whatever was best for them and adapted them for their own use. This happened with Thai scripture and Thai literature as well as Thai customs and Thai ways of thinking.

As far as we know, the Thais in Yunnan also adopted the Chinese scripture as was the evidence seen from stone inscriptions of Kolofeng discovered recently. The research by Professor Muller among the Payi in Yunnan also showed that they used Chinese scriptures to write Thai words. The Thai-Burmese adopted the Mon-Burmese script while the Thais of Assam adopted the Indian script. The southern group, the Thais of Laos, Tongking and Thailand, adopted the Khmer or Khom scripture. This started with Ramkhamhaeng, the King of Sukothai, who invented the Thai system of writing based on Khmer scripture in 1283. This in time was adopted

by the Laotians who further modified it into a more cursive style of writing.

But the Laotians have another form of writing they called "Tua-Dhamma" which was more in line with the writings of the Mons and Burmese. This was perhaps adopted by the Liu who had more contacts with the Burmese. This form has now become archaic and was originally used to record religious writings on palm leaves.

The Sukothai writing of 1283 was also adopted by the Thais of Sibsong-Chutai, who in their close contacts with the Vietnamese and the Chinese, had adopted the brush to be used for writing, making the strokes in Thai scripture almost entirely new but subtly recognisable by the Thais of the south. Thai writing is therefore considered to be the starting point of the history of the Thai literature group, which forms the main body of this book.

Literature among various Thai groups

The Shan group of the Thais has always had a separate history from the Thais of Thailand and therefore had already developed their own source of literature before them. Because the Ahoms were mixed with the local Hindu people, their literature was filled with Hindu influence. Since the Laotians had closer links with the Thais, their literature was more developed along the same lines as that of the Thais, borrowed especially from the south. Common traits are the Jataka tales and the Ramayana epic, both of which were of course influenced by the Buddhist religion which originated in India. This was how Indian and Hindu elements were

brought into Laotian and Thai literature. Magical prayers, old forms of herbal medicine, elephantry, war strategies, swordsmanship, spirit worshipping, women giving birth, fortune-telling, astrology, myths and legends portraying heroes with magical powers and those who attract beautiful maidens and stories of princes and princesses in court abound in old literature books. There were a lot of treatises which bordered on topics concerning the Buddhist religion, the metaphysics, the story of saints, cosmology, the origin of Man, religious commentaries, the story of misdeeds, the vices and punishments that follow etc., where each of the themes are practically the same. Older generations were very pious and very much believed in spirits, supernatural power, magic, myths and legends.

Everything they do must conform to certain traditional practices and rites, and must take place at the propitious moment predicted by astrologers, Brahmin monks or by fortune-tellers. The Laotians, living much further inland, were still less affected by outside influence but the Thais of the lower plains were heavily influenced by Western education and in their way of thinking. Since modern people started to translate Western literature which was filled with crime and sex, the old form of literature was destroyed. Modern novels based on social background, politics, on common people, poverty, complaints on social injustice and even on the government were also being published which brought the story involving rich court life to the ears of the middle class bourgeoisie and even to those of common people. The poetic form of old literature, considered essential to the beauty of the work as well as a pleasure to the ears, gave rise to prose which was more descriptive and rea-

listic. This change was brought about in the course of the last 40 years, when people were still reading poetic romances in the epic style called "Chak-Chak-Wong-Wong". Printing started during the first reign and became popularised during the Fourth Reign (1851-1868) when the King himself established a printing house within the Grand Palace. Here, an American missionary had begun to print travel reports to London in a poetic style written by Mom Rajothai, which was the first privately printed non-religious book put up for public sale. Printing boosted the circulation and distribution of books and prompted men to take up the pen as a profession. Previously, books were written by hand and were available only in its original form or with very few copies. The book was written either on palm leaves or on mulberry paper which was then folded like an accordion. The famous poet Sunthorn Bhoo used to lend his books to readers, where he would make a living out of renting these books out in turn or reading them outloud to interested listeners. The income would not be very rewarding and if the poets were not serving at the royal court, they were usually very poor and lived in very modest conditions.

The old form of literature found on mulberry paper books which were folded like an accordion can still be found in the monasteries and villages of Laos, but the Thais of the south have printed them instead of writing them out by hand. Printed books made from palm leaves still exist in Thailand, but they are considered more as religious subjects and are still very much popular in temples among the Buddhist monks. There are many printing houses around the Great Swing of Wat Sutat Temple at Bamrung Muang Road who

are still busy printing and selling these traditional books.

The Laotian Literature

Laos does not have an official history of literature let alone a library. The King of Luang Prabang had been so keen in bringing old literature books together that he eventually had his own royal collection which was kept in front of the Grand Palace at Pusri. The collection started by the Government at Wat Prakeo in Vientiane however, was not of significance, for it comprised only a few books that were written on palm leaves. Many important temples across Laos have not stored their collection of books, written mainly on religious subjects or on romance, in proper order. Because of this, the books which I found from various locations had neither the date nor the author's name written on them. The Ministry of Education of Laos tried to revive Laotian literature by setting up a Literary Committee, which brought about the completion of the first Laotian dictionary as well as the first batch of Laotian literature books for students to study at school. However, because of a lack of budget caused by civil war for the past 20 years, not much could be done. There was just one man who was capable of reading Laotian and Thai at the time and his work remained unknown to foreigners.

Whereas the Laotians still stuck to the more indigenous form of sentiments expressed in their literature, the Thais of the south were more in contact with India first through Buddhism then through Brahmin monks who were considered important figures in the performance of ceremonies at court. The Thais in the south also had

indirect contacts with Cambodia, the true master of this region.

There has never been a book written about the history of Laotian literature. Laotian literature, expressed both in written and oral form, is known throughout the country, in towns and villages. Legends, whether religious, historical or moral, abounded the country during those times where villagers related the history of their heroes and their origin to each other. There are old books with old stories written by hand on palm leaves and on mulberry paper, which have been handed down from one generation to the next. The books are found in old monasteries and in villages kept safe in the hand of elderlies or the village headmen. Learned monks around the court of Luang Prabang also left behind certain religious treatises and stories which they had written behind. The Thais in Laos were divided into many groups and each had their own sources of literature, stories and tales to tell. Though many of these stories have been retold for generations past, they still need to be written down and kept together as a collection, otherwise they might soon disappear when other influences seep into the country.

Among the Thai groups inhabiting Laos are the Lius of Phongsaly (at Hadsah), Ou Neua, Ou Tay, Boun Tay, Namtha and Muong Sing; the Thai Dam of Samneua, Banban (Xieng Khouang), Namtha, Songkhone; the Thai Hyuans or Thai Ngerns of Namtha and the Poueunes of Xiengkhouang.

Old stories and tales were imbued with old beliefs and superstitions such as men of the past being endowed with supernatural powers and great herculean strength that they could fly. They possessed magical weapons, controlled the elements and could al-

ways win over evil, especially demons and giants. Readers would recount stories about heroes saving the lives of heroines through supernatural powers in the most hazardous situations. As these stories were being told, they were also written down in verse so that they would sound pleasing to the ears rhythmically too. Many of these stories were similar to those of the Thais of the south such as the Jataka tales ending in the Pavet, the Laotian name for Mahajataka. There were also the Palak Palam (corresponding to the Ramakien of the south), the Traipum (story of the Cosmology), and even the farcical tale of Sri Tanon Chai, which the Laotians call Xiang-Mieng (a story of the Eulenspiegel type).

Among the religious stories, the Laotians also have the Milintapanha (the questions of King Milinda). They also have a love story similar to that of Romeo and Juliet's called "Khun Lu and Nang Ua", and many moral treatises such as the famous "Grandfather teaching his grandchildren" (Pu Sorn Larn). The characteristics of the worldly tales or verse romances are similar to the old type of Thai classical tales of the south in vogue in Thailand around the turn of the century. Many Laotian tales were common with the Thais of the northeast.

There is also another traditional art called "Mor-Lam" where singers sing amorous verses impromptu with a Khene or a reed organ to accompany them. Men sing to beautiful women as an act of courtship. The women would give their answers by singing back to them, some expressing their doubts in the man's fidelity since he already had a wife and children waiting for him back home. Laotian literature was at its zenith during the reign of King Lahsaentai

Puvanart (1485-1495) when a Buddhist monk wrote the story of Vessantara. He lived on in the reign of King Visunarat (1500-1520) and in 1500 wrote the first Laotian legendary history of Khun Boulom (or Borom). At the same time, he completed other work such as the story of Thao Hung or Khun Chuang and Nang Tantrai and the story of Thao Hung which recounted the history of the wars of the famous Prince of Payao. His uncle, who ruled at Xieng Khong, had been attacked by the Vietnamese and had called for Hung's help. Hung eventually drove off the Vietnamese but then went on to annexe Luang Prabang and Vietnam. He eventually died in the war against Cambodia in the south, which in this story, was called Keo-Maen-Tatorb Khob-Fah-Tayuen. Nang Tantrai was based on the Buddhsit Jataka stories.

Laotian literature also flourished during the reign of King Potisararat (1520-1550) because the King encouraged Buddhism and religious studies. He invited famous monks from Chiangmai and Pitsanuloke to come and live in Luang Prabang where he also asked for copies of the Tripitaka from Cheing Mai. The famous monk author of this reign, who was very well-versed in Pali, was called Phra Ariyawongsa. He had written stories about the Emerald Buddha, the Phrabang, the Saekkam (or Buddha Sihing) and the Buddha image made from red sandal.

The next period of Laotian literature was during the reign of King Suriyawongsa (1633-1690) where the great masterpiece next to the story of Thao Hung, called Sin-Xay, was written by a poet named Pangkam in 1649.

During the reign of Suriyawongsa, other well-known work

from Laotian literature which had been completed was the story of Sio-Sawat, the Dhammasart, Grandfather teaching his grandchildren, Intiya taught his son, Champa-Siton, Kalaket, Khun Tung, Taeng-on and Phya Patsene.

The story of Sin-Xay :

Phya Kusrat had ruled in the city of Pengchan with a queen called Chanta-Devi and a sister called Sumunta. His sister was one day abducted by a giant from Anorat called Kumpan who made her his wife. King Kusrat became a monk and went in search of his sister until he came to the city of Champa where he met seven beautiful sisters who offered him food. He fell in love with the girls and came back to his hometown, where he eventually sent an embassy to ask for the hands of the seven beautiful maidens. In time, all his eight wives all bore him sons. The son born from the Queen was called Sin-Xay, and the one born from the youngest of the seven maidens was called Sangthong. The astrologers told him that these two boys will one day become very powerful figures. This made the other six wives extremely jealous. The King was one day told by astrologers that they would grow up to become his enemy. With that, the King banished the two mothers and their children into the forest.

When the six other sons grew up, the King had them educated under the apprenticeship of a great teacher but they lost their way on the way to the teacher's home where they met Sin-Xay. After discovering who he was, they came back and lied to the King that they had already completed their studies. The King then sent

them out in search for their aunt so that they could bring her back. The six brothers thus went back to Sin-Xay and lied to him that the King was thinking about him and wanted him to return, but first he must help find their aunt and bring her back. Sin-Xay was very pleased, went with them and left them at the banks of the river, where they could not cross, going with just his brother Sangthong to fight and kill the giant. Princess Sumunta then said that she had a daughter, Sidachan, who was married to Varunna Nag, King of the royal serpents, in the Kingdom undersea. Sin-Xay went to fetch her and brought both mother and daughter back to meet with the other six brothers. The latter, however, pushed Sin-Xay and Sangthong into the river when they were caught off guard. The six brothers then proceeded with their aunt and her daughter, Sidachan, back into town. Princess Sumunta, however, did not think that Sin-Xay had really died, and left three pieces of gems on the riverbank which expressed her wish to the Almighty, that if Sin-Xay was not dead, these three gems should be discovered by somebody and returned to her. A company of Chinese merchants eventually found them and returned them to the King, to whom Sumunta explained the story behind it all. King Kusrat then put the six brothers and their mothers into prison, seeking Sin-Xay and his mother in desperation. When Sin-Xay succeeded to the throne, he sent back the six brothers and their mothers to the city of Champa. Meanwhile, King Varunna-Nag had begun to miss his wife, Sidachan, and arrived with an escort to ask for her return, which was duly granted to him by Sumunta and Sin-Xay. Sio-Sawat was a series of stories based on Laotian proverbs all woven into one long story. Its

author is unknown.

A husband and his wife from Benares had two sons called Si-Saleo and the other Sio-Sawat. One day, a merchant from the city of Champa arrived with a junk in hope of doing trade in Benares. Sio-Sawat asked to go along with the merchant and upon doing so, had asked the merchant so many questions that irritated the merchant immensely that he was told to shut up. Upon his return home, the merchant told Sio-Sawat what he had asked his daughter. The latter understood all these witty questions and began to explain them to his father who then realised what a wise man Sio-Sawat really was. He therefore gave him his daughter's hands in marriage. The King of that country had long been unjust to his people and the entire country was suffering. Realising that his place on the throne was being threatened, he forced his men to guard his place throughout the night. Inspecting them in the middle of the night, he discovered that they had been sleeping and had them all executed.

This was done to several people until it got to Sio-Sawat's father-in-law and his men's turn. The father-in-law bade his farewell to his daughter, knowing full well that he too would be put to death. Sio-Sawat, however, had asked to die in his place instead. During each execution, the King would come out, where Sio-Sawat would be at the entrance chanting magic cantos which greatly puzzled the King. He repeated these chants throughout all of the four executions until daybreak. Wanting to know who Sio-Sawat was and what he was chanting, the King duly demanded Sio-Sawat's audience, for he had admired Sio-Sawat's intelligence so much that he wanted to have him as his personal adviser. From then on,

Sio-Sawat slowly turned the King into a good King and into a better person. He was soon made the King's Prime Minister where the entire city became prosperous and its people were filled with joy.

The next important piece of Laotian literature existed during the reign of Prince Anu of Vientiane, which corresponded to the times of the "Luepasoon". Because this book discussed mental afflictions in verse form and because the country had been under Thai influence, it was thought that Prince Anu himself had written it.

There are many Laotian literature books written on palm leaves that can be found all over the country, but it is difficult to classify these since nobody could tell who wrote them and when they were completed. They were simply copies from older versions which had been handed down from one generation to the next and many of them had been kept in monasteries for centuries without ever having been touched by anyone. Students went through extremely hard work to sort all these books out since nobody had ever made an effort to do so according to their subjects and their period.

During my intensive travels throughout Laos, I located these stories from different parts of the country, and managed to classify them according to the various regions of Laos that I'd visited : the literature of Thai Liu in Sibsong-Panna, the literature of the Thai Dam people at Banban and off Namtha; the literature of the Puthai around Songkhon, the literature of the Thai-Ngern or Thai-Nyuan at Namtha and the proper Laotian literature, some of which were

already mentioned above, some at Chiengkong, Khong Sedone, Pakse, Khong and among the inhabitants of the Mekong River Valley.

The story of the Carambola Tree

This story was discovered at Savannakhet where it was located for me by a teacher at a school there.

There was once a rich man who died, leaving his two living sons behind. While the elder one was a wicked man, the younger one was a wonderful boy who loved his father immensely. When the younger brother went out to find medicine for his father one day in hope that he will soon recover, the elder brother wished for his father's death and cruelly quickened it. When the younger brother returned, he had found that his father had already died. He was so upset that he swooned.

The two brothers lived together for sometime, when one day the elder brother married and made his brother his domestic servant. But because of his love for his brother, the younger brother agreed to serve his brother and wife whole-heartedly. However, when he too got married, his elder brother kicked him and his wife out of the house to live in a thatched house near the forest. He was not given the tiniest share of his rich father's heritage which had been bequeathed to them both, because his elder brother took everything. Behind the thatched house which he and his wife was living in, there was a big carambola tree which often bore magnificent yellow fruit. But everytime they ripened, a golden swan would eat them all, leaving nothing for the poor couple to eat. When they

once complained about this to the swan, the swan said that it would make it up to them. It told the couple to sew a bag that is seven cubits long within three days. Having said this, he flew away.

The poor couple did as they were told and, after three days, went to the carambola tree where the swan was already waiting for them. It asked the younger brother to climb up on its back to which he obeyed and was carried across the oceans to a distant island which was all covered in gold. Allowing him to collect the gold, the swan flew off in search of some food and said that he will return in a while. After sometime, it came back to take the younger brother home and, with the gold, the young man was now able to build a beautiful house for himself. One day, he thought of his elder brother and sent a servant round to invite him over, but the elder brother said that if he wanted him to visit his house, he must spread a red carpet starting from his own home up to his front door, and in the centre of the carpet, he must place a piece of white cloth. When the younger brother agreed to do this, the elder brother was forced to keep his word and visit his brother's home. When he saw how wealthy his brother was, he immediately asked how this was possible to which the story about the swan and the island of gold was recounted to him. Now he too wanted some gold. When the carambola fruit ripened, he went to the tree to see the swan eating the fruit as before. The man then made complaints to the swan as his younger brother had done and the swan promised to make up for this by asking him to prepare a bag seven cubits long and wait for him in the next three days. The elder brother made a much bigger bag than was told to and made his wife wait for the swan on the

appointed day under the carambola tree. The swan came, but his wife also wanted to go too, so her husband allowed her go in his place. The swan took her across the seas and over to the island where it dropped her off and told her to be ready when it comes back for her. Having searched for some food, the swan thus returned to the island to find the woman still collecting gold. Having loaded her already huge bag, she stuffed some more gold into her dress. The swan told her to hurry up for the sun was already getting hotter. When she was at last ready, she went on the swan's back, but halfway across the sea, the swan felt very tired from the heavy load, added with the fact that there was a storm approaching. It then asked her to throw away some of the gold, to which the woman refused. When the storm approached, the swan swayed to one side, tipping the woman over and into the sea where she drowned.

The Creation of the World

There was also a palm leaf book which I found in a village off Muong Sayaburi (former Paklay of Larnxang under the Thais, controlled by the village headman. This was called "Pathom Kappa" and it read the following : "In the beginning, there was God. The name of this God was Phya Thene and he created the first man and woman. There was no light nor did the sun shine then. The land was very small, not any larger than a deer's footprint. Trees were as small as tiny balsam plants, lobsters were as big as buffaloes and carps were as big as elephants. Religion did not exist and The Lord Buddha had not yet arrived. There were no animals, no Hell, no moonlight nor sunshine. There were no pillars supporting Earth

and there were no rocks, save a large empty space and the wind blowing. When the teaching of the blessed one was announced, everything started with the wind blowing over the waters. Through this, fish and Earth were created. The wind blew again and a man appeared, followed by a woman. The wind continued to blow and there rose two lumps of earth, where standing on each was a man and a woman. The wind blew again and the two pieces of land were united, allowing man and woman to become united when the man walked up to her. These were the first man and woman on Earth, the man's name being Grandfather Sangasa and the woman's being Sangasi (not Adam and Eve!). They planted trees and grass and made animals of all kinds out of clay. They made rules where certain animals were allowed to eat such and such animals. Both man and woman worked hard to help each other create various things. They then made a son and a daughter but their children would not grow because there was no rice to feed them. In the forest guarded by fierce beasts, there was a giant who had been growing rice. Grandfather then sent an emissary to ask him for a share of the crop. The animals which had been guarding the entrances of the field let the Grandfather pass through and the giant gave the ambassador a grain of rice as big as a man's arm. Grandfather Sangasa planted it and from then on, rice plants propagated and provided people with an eternal supply of food. Because of rice, the children grew up and created altogether seven of their own children. These children were sent out to rule the seven lands which the country was divided into. Men further multiplied in greater numbers. And, when The Lord Buddha arrived in this world, Grandmother Sangasi fell in love

with him and tried to seduce him, so for this, she was cursed and was turned into Mother Earth (Nang Toranee). Grandfather Sangasa became a stork who lived along the riverbanks so as to be near her at all times.

This story is worth studying and is quite an original one since it gives a clear idea of what the Laotians thought was the beginning of the world.

At Savannakhet, the following books are found at Lahanam in Puthai village.

Khun Ting, Nang Ua, Xiengmieng (the Laotian version of Sitanonchai), the Golden Turtle, Karaket, Sao Samen, Master Golden Tongue, Thai Thao, the Black Crow, Thao Konkak, Honghin, Sin-Xay, the Sparrow, the Cock (Kai Keo), Suriwong, Kakanam, Mah Youi, Pavet (the Laotian version of Vessantara), the Abidhamma (Buddhist metaphysics), Phra Chao Gotama, Pathom Sombodhi, The Dog with Nine Tails, Mahosot (Jataka Tale), Teng-On, Thao Phadeng and Nang Ai, Purirat (Jataka Tale), Sotat-kim-None, Padaek and Pasamoh, Singkalo, Sanghomtat, the Golden Bull, the Red Crow.

These books are all rich literature and because they are old books, their authors are not known and the period in which they were written could not be determined. They had simply been passed down from one generation to the next and were copies from older versions. However, they were always read and enjoyed by the common people and provided reading material for people to entertain themselves with in their spare time. It is quite extraordinary to see that a number of these books is also in common with the literature

of the southern Thais, especially Buddhist literature such as Pathom Sombodhi, the Abhidhamma and various stories on birth in Buddhism.

The Story of Honghin or the Stone Swan

The brother of the great nobleman had been kidnapped by a giant. The nobleman thus became a hermit and went in pursuit of the thief, but a god came and told him that his endeavour would be useless since his brother had been kidnapped by a very strong giant. It was therefore better to go back and find somebody with magical powers to fight with him. The nobleman went back to ask for the favour of the gods to bless him with a worthy son. In time, his wife did give birth to a son and, at the same time, his four other minor wives had persuaded her to blindfold her eyes while giving birth so that they could use this chance to bury her child and replace it with a puppy instead. This caused Indra, the God of Heaven, to come down and save the child by bringing him up to Heaven. When he grew up to become an adult, Indra turned a rock into a swan, which the grown-up child, now known as Honghin, would use to return to his mother who had by now been driven away from her home to live with a poor gardener. His four brothers had also grown and played chess with him, but was never able to beat him at the game, and so swore that they would be friends forever. The father now told his four sons how their uncle had been kidnapped by a giant and asked them to try and get him back. Since the brothers did not know how to do this, they went to seek Honghin's help, who would save their uncle in the end.

The Story of Kakanam

One day, Nang Lah's field was tampled by a troop of elephants. When Nang Lah came out to the field, she found an elephant's footprint that was filled with water. Thirsty, she immediately drank the water and soon conceived a son she called Kakanam.

One day while Nang Lah went out digging for potatoes, a female giant saw her and wanted to eat her but Kakanam fought back and overpowered her. When she begged for him to spare her life, he agreed on the condition that she promised never to threaten the lives of others again. When she promised to do so, Kakanam let her go.

Nang Lah was later taken by the King of the country as a minor consort and Kakanam now went on his way to face with his own destiny. On the way, he met a strong man who was dragging along one hundred big bamboos. Kakanam stepped on the 100 bamboos and stopped the man from continuing with his journey. The man looked back, fought with him, but was overpowered by Kakanam. It was then that he swore to be his loyal servant. The two men proceeded with their journey. Kakanam then saw another strong man pulling 100 carts, went over to the last cart, pulled it back and stopped the man from moving on. The man fought with him but was again overpowered and swore to be Kakanmam's loyal servant.

The three men now went on their journey until they reached a town. Now feeling hungry, Kakanam sent the man with one hundred bamboos to find crickets' legs for him to eat. Upon doing so,

the cricket kicked him so hard that he flew off a mile. Realising that his servant would not return, Kakanam sent the man with the one hundred carts to carry out the task instead, but he too was kicked so hard by the cricket that he flew off one hundred miles. Kakanam now endeavoured to pull off the cricket's legs himself. By this time, the two men had now returned and Kakanam sent them off one after the other to fetch some firewood for him to cook the crickets' legs. On the way, they met a female giant who broke off their legs and ate them. Realising that his men would never return, Kakanam went to fight with the giant himself. Having been overpowered by him, the female giant gave him a magic wand in exchange for her life. This wand enabled its holder to kill people by pointing its top at the victim and reviving them by pointing the bottom end at the dead. Kakanam thus brought his two friends back to life with the magic wand. The three now proceeded with their journey until they arrived at a town where an eagle had eaten up all its inhabitants save one person. She was the daughter of the King who had survived because her father had hidden her inside a drum that was sealed up at the top. When Kakanam arrived and started to beat the drum, the King's daughter cried out, believing that the eagle had come to take her life. Kakanam took her out from the drum and upon knowing of her misfortune, asked how he could make the eagle come back. He was told to light a fire in order to attract the eagle. Once this had been done, the eagle came and Kakanam killed him with the magic wand. He then used the other end of the wand to revive all the dead inhabitants. Kakanam then appointed the man with one hundred bamboos to be the governor of the town and then

continued on his journey with the man with the one hundred carts. They soon arrived at another quiet town where a boa constrictor had eaten up everybody except the King's daughter who had been hidden away in a hole inside a pillar. Kakanam arrived and knocked on the pillar by accident, making the girl scream out in fear. Kakanam brought her out and upon knowing about the boa, lit a fire in order to attract its attention. He also killed it and revived all the inhabitants he had earlier killed. He then appointed the man with the one hundred carts to govern that town and went away alone on his journey to seek for more adventure. He arrived at another town where all the young girls had been eaten up by a female giant, except the King's daughter, who was the last person to be given up that night. The people went in a procession to escort the lady to an appointed pavilion where Kakanam had arrived that same night and had entered the pavilion. When the female giant arrived, he had a fight with her. This happened to be the same giant who had kidnapped his mother at the beginning of the story. When he had the upper hand, though, Kakanam let her go without killing her because she once did him a favour by giving him the magic wand. Repenting of all her wicked deeds in the past which she knew were beyond redemption, she collapsed and died. A king's servant found her, beat her and went back to report to the King that he had killed the invincible giant. The King asked his daughter to confirm this but she could not do so because the fight had occurred at dark and she was therefore unable to see anything. She had, however, clipped off a piece of Kakanam's coat and asked the king to summon all the adults so that she could find the person whose coat matched the

sample material which she had. Kakanam resided with a gardener all this time and did not turn up, so the princess could not find the person she wanted. At last somebody brought him along because he was the only one left and the cloth fit Kakanam's coat perfectly.

The black crow

This story is about a man who was as black as a crow and was sent down the river to live in a garden with an old woman. The king of that country had a daughter who was attracted by Khene songs played by the black crow that she came down to sing with him and later fell in love with him. The king was, however, strongly against this match. The black crow then sent the old woman to ask for her hands but the King's dowry, from heaps of silver, gold, animals, to gems etc. made it impossible for the crow to fulfill his conditions. Indra, the God of Heaven, eventually helped him out so that the two could be married.

The dog with nine tails

A man's wife was kidnapped. One day the husband had to go out in search for her. On the way, he met a dog who had nine tails. He grabbed one of its tails which made him fly over the oceans to a distant land. At the end of the long journey, they arrived at an island where the dog's tail came off. They journeyed on to eight more islands and at each island the dog lost a tail, until all its tails were eventually lost. The dog soon died, leaving the man to wonder how he would continue with his journey. A green-headed fly came along to feed on the dog's carcass, but the man stopped him

from doing so. The fly then pleaded with him, promising to show him the way to meet with his wife if he would allow him to have his feast. When this wish was granted, the man arrived at a place where he espied a servant carrying water to his wife. He asked her for a drink where he secretly dropped a ring into the jar. When his wife finished her bath, she found the ring and knew at once that her husband was waiting out there for her.

Literature is also quite rich among the Thai group of the north called the Lius where the region under survey was at Ou Neua and Outay. As these two towns belonged to the Thais of Sipsong Panna, part of whom were still in China, it only showed that the original Thai of Nanchao must have developed quite a mind for literature since there were books full of these stories and tales still being kept in various monasteries. A man, called Chao Khana Ton, who was a monk for seven years at the Wat Luang of Ou Neua told me that he had read quite a number of books from a collection of some 200 books kept at that monastery, which was supposed to be about 500 years old.

After a hard day's work, while lying on his pillow and taking a few puffs of opium to fortify himself, he told me a few stories until the late hours of the night. The most popular story of the Lius is :

The story of Bora

When Bora's mother died, his father remarried. Bora also had a younger sister. Their step-mother wanted to get rid of them and asked the father to take them away into a deep forest and leave

them there. They also had a horse with them. When they woke up in the middle of the night, the horse brought them back home. Seeing this, the stepmother killed the horse and incited the father to leave them in the forest again. At night a tiger came and ate his sister, and Bora was thus left all alone. He eventually lost his way and reached a town where he met a group of children whom he played with. At this town, a rich couple who was childless desperately wanted to adopt a son. They had a dream that a boy was coming their way and so went out to see lots of children running around frivolously playing amongst themselves. They immediately tried to find out which one of them had no parents and when they met Bora, they later on adopted him when they found out that he was an orphan. Bora never forgot about his freinds and came out to play with them all the time. His adopted father gave him a buffalo and Bora killed it in order to feed it to his friends. His father never questioned his son about the disappeareance of the buffalo and even gave him another one to play with. In time, Bora was appointed "King of children". His clan grew bigger and had their own administrative organisation with ministers appointed by Bora. The King of the country was now challenged by a neighbouring King to a contest of three riddles. If he could not solve these three riddles, he would have to give up the country to the neighbouring King but if he could solve them, the latter would have to give up his country to him. The wisdom of Bora was known throughout and he was invited by the King to help him solve these riddles.

When the time for asking the riddles came, the challenger brought along a mother and her daughter. The riddle was to work

out which is the mother and which is the daughter. Bora took them to dinner where the daughter hesitated to eat while the mother had no qualms about eating first. Bora knew straight away which one was the mother. The challenger then brought two horses, the mother and her colt. To differentiate which was the mother, Bora took them to the river. The young one stayed on shore and allowed the mother to go up to the river to drink first. Bora knew straight away that the colt had to be the one waiting on shore. The third riddle was to identify the top and bottom end of a piece of sandalwood. In doing so, Bora threw the piece of wood into the water where the lower end sank. Bora was given the country to govern where he now sought for a wife. It was said that the princess of Sipine was beautiful but her brother did not consider Bora noble enough to marry his sister. At night, Bora sent a flying box to abduct the princess and left monkeys instead of men in her palace. A fight ensued in which the princess' brother was eventually killed. As the person who had strongly objected to the marriage had already died, the princess' father willingly accepted his son-in-law when the latter came with his new wife to ask for his forgiveness. When his father-in-law died, Bora also became King of his country.

The two brothers

Kampa was a poor man living with a monk in a temple. One night he met a ghost and had a fight with it, being slowly overpowered by the ghost, he swore to become his faithful brother. They went out to the woods together to make charcoal. After the fire burnt out, they found a gong and they banged this against a fishing

line. With this, they tried to catch fish but instead caught three daughters of a royal serpent from the underwater kingdom. The daughters however escaped with the hooks still in their mouths. The ghost disguised itself as a doctor and took out the hooks and nursed the sisters, after which he was rewarded with a horse that could make gold and silver. Kampa now went to a city called Para (called Paranasi by the southern Thais) and saw the King's beautiful daughter to whom he married. He went to reside with a gardener and asked the latter to go and ask for her hands. The King of Para then made conditions which he did not think anybody could fulfill, that is, Kampa must now have a road of gold paved up to the stairs of the palace. His friend, the ghost, accomplished this within seven days and seven nights but the King still refused. Finally, though, he had to give in since the people thought Kampa to be an extraordinary man and forced the King to accept.

The story of Ngu Lai, the striped serpent

One day, a peasant was felling trees in the forest when he saw a giant serpent kidnapping the Emperor of China's daughter. The Emperor made a declaration throughout his country that whoever was able to bring his daughter back could have her as his wife. The peasant thus volunteered to bring her back and went to the edge of the water where Paya In, the King of Heaven, gave him a bow and a sword. He then went up to the top of a hill where he found a pavilion that was filled with bones of beautiful girls which the serpent had eaten. When the peasant arrived, the Emperor's daughter was still kept in his palace in the underworld. The peasant

waited until the serpent came out and killed it with his bow and arrow and followed the serpent's traces into the deep, dark cave where he met another serpent guarding the cave. When he also managed to kill it with his bow and arrow, he entered the palace and rescued the Emperor's daughter. He took her to his home in the village where he was living with another man and his son. Wanting his son to marry the princess, this other man sent his son and the princess to see the Emperor to ask for her hands in marriage.

Believing that she would be marrying the man who rescued her, the Emperor organised a wedding ceremony for the impostor, to his daughter's refusal since he was not the man who rescued her from the serpent. The Emperor then summoned all the young men in the country and asked his daughter to throw a garland at them. The right man will catch this garland. The peasant was so timid that he hid behind the others, but the garland soared up high into the air and fell around his neck. He was then married to the princess and the execution of the impostor was ordered by the King.

The story of Chitta Sali

The son of the King of Kasi and the son of a nobleman once went together to Para (again Benares) for their education and each learned how to leave his own body to enter another's. When they came across a dead stag upon returning home, they both wished to put their knowledge to the test.

The nobleman's son left his body first and entered that of the stag's and started to run about. When he left its body, he asked the prince to try it out for himself. When the prince entered the

body of the stag, the wicked son of the nobleman seized the opportunity to go inside the body of the prince and leave him in the forest. He then came back to town and reported himself to the King, pretending that he was his son. He then went to the prince's palace and tried to sleep with his wife, who refused to do so with the explanation that although the body she saw belonged to that of her husband's, his manners and his ways were very different. She asked him to go and sleep elsewhere.

Meanwhile, when the stag prince came back to town he had seen a dead parrot and decided to enter its body so that he could fly to the window of the princess and identify himself. As expected, the princess failed to recognise her husband to his anger. All along though, she told him that she had always been faithful to him. When she demanded that he prove himself by perching himself on her wrist, the parrot complied and told her never to tell this to anyone as the nobleman's wicked son would then try to kill him.

They then devised a plan for the court to organise a ceremony where all the people would be able to see the impostor prince practise his art. By achieving this, a dead stag was presented to the audience, whose body was immediately entered by the impostor. The parrot immediately took this opportunity to return to his princely body, preventing the impostor from entering again. The evil man was driven away from the palace and was destined to become a stag for the rest of his life.

The story of Lanka

This is the Liu version of the famous Ramayana, and is very

similar to the Laotian version told by the ancient people of the south. Paya Lanka was a man of great supernatural power. One day, he went into the palace of the Queen of Heaven and tried to make love to her who became very angry and reported this to Paya In, the King of Heaven. Paya Lanka was sent down to Earth where he was to be born to the Queen of Lanka. At his birth though, the astrologers prophesised that since he would grow up to kill his father, it was necessary to get rid of him. He was put on a raft and drifted down the river to an island where he was found by a hermit who raised him.

The two brothers, Rama and Lak, went to Taxila in their search for knowledge. When they had finished their studies, they began to make their way back home when they arrived at a road that branched into eight different directions. While trying to decide which way to take, they met a merchant who told them that one of the ways led to a hermit's home, and that the hermit had a very beautiful daughter living with him. The hermit had asked Paya In, the King of Heaven, for a very powerful bow. He was told that whoever was able to lift the bow and shoot the arrow with it could have his beautiful daughter for his wife. Men came from distant lands when they heard of this challenge, but none of them were able to do so successfully, including Lanka. When Rama attempted to lift the bow, however, he was successful, so the hermit allowed him to marry his beautiful daughter.

Continuing with their route, Rama met a golden stag which really was Lanka in disguise. Lanka wanted to lure Rama and his brother away from the lady so that he could have her for his own

wife. When the lady saw the stag, she asked Rama to capture it for her.

While pursuing it, Rama asked his brother to guard his wife for him. When Rama left, his brother heard a voice say, "Come and help me." His brother, Lak, therefore left the lady, asking Mother Earth to protect her in his place. When Rama saw his brother, he questioned, "What are you doing here? Where is my wife?" Lak told him how he had heard a cry for help and how he had entrusted Rama's wife in the care of Mother Earth. Rama then said, "How could you have trusted Mother Earth?" Having overheard his distrust in her, Mother Earth was greatly offended and allowed Lanka to kidnap Rama's beautiful wife.

The two distressed brothers thus went in search for her and while walking under a tree had heard a monkey crying on its own, its tears dripping on Rama's head. The monkey explained that he was sad because he had a brother but they did not love each other the way Rama and Lak did. Upon being questioned further, the monkey recounted his story.

The monkey had a brother and both of them had encountered a fierce, wild buffalo whom they fought with in a cave. Before fighting, he told the monkey to keep an eye out for signs of blood spurting from the cave. If the blood was red and thin, then it was his, in which case his brother was to close the entrance to the cave to prevent the buffalo from escaping. When the brother went to fight with the buffalo, he managed to kill it, but the blood spurting out from the cave was diluted for there was a sudden downpour of rain, making the blood appear very light in colour. Thinking that

his brother was dead, the monkey immediately sealed the entrance to the cave with huge stones. His brother thought that the monkey had betrayed him and wanted to get rid of him so that he could rule the kingdom by himself, so he tried desperately to escape from the cave. When he discovered that the head of the buffalo had magical properties, he cut it off and threw it at the entrance of the cave which broke the entrance open. Seeing his brother out in search for him with the intent to kill, the younger brother escaped and came to sit on top of the tree where Rama and Lak found him crying.

Upon being asked whether he had seen Rama's wife, the monkey answered that he saw Lanka taking her away and coming over this way. Rama then went with the monkey and helped him regain his country by killing his elder brother. Then the three of them went to fight Lanka and brought the lady back after having killed him.

When Rama and his wife were back in their country, the nobles asked her what Lanka looked like. The lady took out a banana leaf and cut it into the shape of Lanka to show it to the nobles and then put the banana silhouette under the seat.

When Rama came back and sat on the seat, the silhouette cried out from underneath, "I am a King. You are insulting me by sitting on me!" When Rama found the silhouette of Lanka, he was furious, thinking that his wife loved Lanka. He ordered her to be put to death, but his brother, Lak, put her on a raft and floated her downstream. She was found and picked up by a hermit who looked after her until she gave birth to a son.

The hermit loved the child so much that he used to play

with it while the mother went out to find vegetables and fruit. One day the mother met a monkey who asked her why she went alone and did not take her son with her. Having heard this, she went back to fetch her son and took him with her only to find that her child had already disappeared. The hermit was vexed at this and feared that the lady would blame him for the loss of her child, so he cut out an identical tracing of the lost child and gave it life by using his hands to move it about. When the lady returned, she embraced her "child", not realising that her real baby was sitting right behind her. In time, the two children played with one another happily.

One day, Rama came to look for his wife and set free a horse which roamed about into their garden. The two brothers caught the wild horse and tied it up. When Rama approached them with his army, the two children killed Rama and the entire army, took away his clothes and wore them. When their mother returned, she immediately recognised the clothes as belonging to Rama and went to seek for the hermit's help, whose magical powers brought Rama back to life. This enabled him to return to his capital and to his wife and children.

The story of the Wok Khai Hin

When a piece of rock at the foot of the mountain was heated by the sun, it turned into an egg, which grew into a strong and powerful monkey. In search of fruit in the forest one day, the monkey came across a group of monkeys who told him that beneath the pool of water over which he was standing, there was a grotto where a huge town was to be found. Having heard this, he dived into the

water to find this town resplendent with fruit and other sources of food. He came back to Earth and persuaded the other monkeys to go and live there. When he was made their King, he decided that it was time that he had weapons as well as a good education as any King should, and therefore went in search of them.

Along the way, he met a hermit who taught him all there was to know about magic, and when he came back to his town, he found that no one was living there anymore except a small monkey who was hiding in fear. He learned that while he was away, a giant had come to eat up all the monkeys. Furious at this, he went in search of the giant and killed him.

He defeated all of his opponents anywhere he went and because he always asked them where he could find priceless treasures, it was revealed to him that underneath the ocean lay a dress that was embroidered with gold, a club with a golden handle and a powerful bow. Upon this knowledge, he went down to the heart of the ocean to retrieve the magical possessions of the Royal Sea Serpent. The latter went to the King of Heaven Paya In, to complain about what the monkey had done, causing Paya In to send down a group of divine beings to fight with the monkey. They all lost to the powerful beast. Trying then to pacify the monkey, Paya In took him to heaven and made him his horsekeeper. This position caused him to be the subject of great mockery among others since it was similar to being a servant, so the monkey quit when he realised what a fool he had been. Paya In then sent another group of men to try and overpower him but they failed drastically. The monkey instead drove them to Paya In's garden, ate up all his divine fruit

whose magical properties allowed its eaters to live eternally.

The monkey then went to attack Paya In who had fled to seek the help of The Lord Buddha in Heaven. The Lord came down in order to show the monkey his power and to tame him. He asked the monkey to jump over his hand, which the monkey attempted to do several times but unsuccessfully. In the end, The Lord placed the monkey underneath a rock and put a mountain on top of him so that he could no longer escape. He was to remain there until a saint came along in search of religion in India and released him so that he could serve him. The story carries on from one miracle to the next until the Chinese saint and the monkey brought religion back to China from India.

Nang Maew or Mrs. Cat

The King of Paranasi (Benares in the olden days) had a son whom he wanted to marry off to a young maiden. He tried to find all the beautiful girls in town for his son to choose from but he would not look at a single one of them, insisting that he wanted to choose his own wife. When the King of Heaven disguised himself as three very charming ladies, the son would not look at them either. On the way, the King of Heaven created a very beautiful house with a very attractive lady living in it, but our hero would not even stop to look inside. Finally, he came to a town where the governor was preparing a wedding ceremony for his son. When our hero decided to stay with them, the governor told him that if his daughter-in-law had a daughter, he wanted our hero to marry her. The truth is, she already had one, but she was a cat. This did not matter

much to our hero who married her anyway and kept her in a cage.

On their way home, they saw the three beautiful daughters of the Royal Serpent, Paya Naga, the King of the Sea, bathing in the river. Because they had left their dresses on the riverbank, the cat came out of the cage and stole them. When they had finished bathing, the three ladies went to look for their dresses and met with the cat's husband who returned their dresses to them. They were very grateful for this and told him that they would find an occasion to repay him for his kindness.

The husband then went fishing and the cat came out of her cage in the form of a beautiful woman to help him catch a large amount of fish. Not knowing who the beautiful lady was, he asked her to introduce herself. "I am your wife," she replied curtly and went back into the cage.

When the father heard that his son had married a cat, he was greatly distressed and tried to get rid of her. He sent a message to her, saying that he was having a religious ceremony and asked his son to bring back as many things as possible that would be impossible for any other man to find. The son consulted with his wife who fulfilled the wishes of his demanding father. They then went back in a lovely procession accompanied by the three beautiful daughters of the Serpent King who carried the gifts brought from their father's palace. The father was so ashamed of himself at the thought of his misdeed that he fled, leaving the people to vote for his son to take the throne in his place.

The story of Sutun

Love between two different races is never an easy affair. If a man brings back a foreign wife into his home, he will find it difficult to get along with his family and his people who will no doubt work against him. Such is the story with Sutun, son of the King of Paranas.

Not far from the town where he lived, there was a pond where divine nymphs called Kinnaris would often come to bathe. Kinnaris are not considered as human beings because they have magic wings like those of birds and they live on a hilltop that is inaccessible by humans. Kinnaris are women whose beauty is supposed to be unsurpassed by humans. A hunter came to the pond one day and upon seeing the Kinnaris bathing, decided to kidnap one of them for the prince to have in marriage. He hid behind the bushes, waited for their arrival and used a lasso to catch one of them. He took her back to the young and single Prince Sutun who fell in love with her immediately and married the beautiful young maiden.

Now there arose a war and the King sent Sutun away to battle with the invaders. Left behind completely unprotected, the Kinnari princess had been very much hated by the royal father who saw his son's absence as an opportunity to get rid of her. One day the King dreamed that the court astrologer had prophesised that his son would be victorious and would return home, so he ordered the princess to leave immediately, otherwise he would kill her. The princess asked for her clothes (which had magical properties) so that she could dance in all her splendour for the King to admire one

final time before she leaves. Having worn her clothes, she was now able to fly away and escape safely from the palace. On her way home, she stopped at a hermitage where she left a ring with the hermit, requesting him to give it to Sutun whenever he happened to pass by. When Sutun went back to the city and found his beloved wife missing, he went in search of her straight away.

He came to the hermit's place who gave him the ring that his wife had left him. The hermit also warned him that he would pass three dangerous places on the way to his wife's abode, these are, a river hot enough to melt iron, a passage which ran between two moving mountains, so narrow that those who walk through it would be crushed to death and a desert that flowed like water and therefore impossible to cross. Sutun, however, was determined to find his wife and decided to brave all kinds of danger for her. The hermit thus gave him a monkey to lead the way.

When he came to the deadly river, a serpent suddenly came to his rescue by arching its back over the river for him to walk across safely. When he came to the narrow pathway with mobile mountains, he filled the gap with rocks and walked over it. He then came to the desert and saw a big bird called Has-Sadi-Ring, whose feather he clinged onto. The bird flew him over to the other side of the hill where his wife was to be found.

When he arrived, Kinnari's father was preparing for her arranged marriage with another man. Seeing a female servant coming out to fetch some water for Kinnari's bath, Sutun stopped her, learned of her imminent marriage, and quickly dropped the ring into the bucket without the servant knowing. His wife eventually

found the ring at the bottom of the bucket and knew at once that her husband had come to rescue her. She refused to proceed with the marriage.

Sutun duly presented himself to her father, asking for her hands in marriage. The father gave him a riddle for him to solve instead, and asked him whether he really knew which of his seven daughters, was his wife, as they all looked identical. He then told his seven daughters to hide behind the curtains and to each show their finger. If Sutun could tell which one was his wife's finger, he would return her to him. On that same day, his father-in-law set another obstacle for him which was a huge wall which prevented him from entering the palace. Sutun destroyed this with a bow and arrow.

Since all the fingers of the seven maids were identical, Sutun asked Paya In, the King of Heaven, to help him to choose the right one. Paya In thus disguised himself as a fly and helped Sutun by perching himself on his wife's finger. Having reclaimed his wife, Sutun's father-in-law no longer objected with their marriage.

The story of Chompu Rit Taeng Khio

Because Chompu was still unmarried, he went in search of someone who was worthy of his love. He approached the house of an old woman who grew gourds for a living. One of these gourds was quite big but never ripened so Prince Chompu took it into his room where the maid would secretly prepare food for him in his bed. One night Prince Chompu saw the gourd moving and so decided to crack it open. Inside, he saw a beautiful young maiden and

decided to marry her.

The story of Prince Mahawong and Nang Taeng On

Prince Mahawong was the son of King Paranasi. His parents had wanted him to marry but he did not like any of the beautiful maidens that were available in town. One day while hunting with his attendants, he came across the King of Heaven who had disguised himself as a golden stag. The prince stated that if anyone allowed the stag to escape, that person would be severely punished. Prince Mahawong then shot the stag's leg and followed it closely along with two of his attendants until they came to the edge of the sea. At this point, the stag had disappeared. Since It was getting darker by that time, the prince and his attendants spent the night there.

That night, the King of Heaven came to see him in his dream, telling him that at the bottom of the sea, there was a beautiful maid destined to become his wife. Prince Mahawong then sent down the two attendants to ask for the hands of his future bride. At the bottom of the ocean, there was a kingdom of crocodiles whose King was called Paya Kumpira. He had a brother called Korakat and a sister called Nang Taeng On. When the two attendants came to ask for the hands of their sister for the prince to have in marriage, the two crocodile brothers asked where they had come from. When they learned that the prince was human, the brothers refused to say anything save that they too were beasts and knew only of bestial ways. When the two attendants insisted to believe this, the two crocodile brothers finally gave in.

Prince Mahawong sent a message to his parents and asked for an escort of elephants, horses and men to bring his wife home. After his return, the King resigned and Prince Mahawong became King in his stead. In his realm, there lived a millionaire who had six beautiful daughters. When they grew up, the father died and the mother could not think of anyone that was of equal dignity to her daughters. Therefore she brought the six daughters to the King who took them as wives in his palace. After some time, one of the six maidens gave birth to a son, and Nang Taeng On (the first wife) was about to bear a child. Now the mother of the six ladies thought that if Nang Taeng On bore him a son, he would be succeeding instead of her grandson. With this thought, she bribed the men in the palace to take away Nang Taeng-On's son and kill him so that the son of one of the six sisters would have no rivals to the throne. The real crown prince was, however, saved and after a lot of adventures, came back to settle matters.

These stories had many things in common with literature of the southern Thais such as the Ramayana of the south pervading to the north under the new name of Lanka and the story of Sutun (or Sudhon of the south). In fact the people in Phongsaly believed that at the back of their town against the towering mountain, there is a pond where the Kinnaris used to come down from their abode on the mountaintop to bathe. There are fragments from the Jataka tales in the story of Bora, where the three riddles was the main theme. Wok Khai Hin is undoubtedly taken from Chinese literature since the Lius have been living next door to the Chinese. Chinese influence seeped into Indian literature, making Thai literature all the

more richer in terms of contexts and ideas.

Literature with religious themes also flourished along with the worldly kind of romance and adventures, where the heroes go out to find the beautiful princesses and save them from danger. The world is filled with miracles, magic and wonders. Men and animals alike work together to help each other out and even intermarry like men and serpents do in the undersea kingdom.

Religious books abounding Liu literature include the following:

- Dhamma Sut: this is about the discipline inherent in the Buddhist order
- The story of Anaen (corrupted from Ananda) a disciple of The Lord Buddha.
- Okat Samdaeng : this tells how a monk is ordained.
- the story about the eight saints (Kalana, Kassapa, etc.)
- Dhamma Sampanit, etc.

But the region is also rich in legends which have been passed on from one person to the next. There is a story that is commonly believed not only by the Thais in the north but also various tribesmen, that Man came from gourds, that Heaven and Earth used to be connected to each other by a vine called Kua Khao Kat and when the vine was cut off was Man separated from Heaven.

There is a legend which belongs to the Punoï of Phongsalay that their progenitors came from a gourd. This legend also has common details with the legends believed by the Laotians concerning the origin of the first Man and how Laos was founded.

In days of old, two hermits had arrived from the Himalayan

Mountains to live in a cave at Phu Suang (where Luang Prabang was later founded) where they decided to establish a town there. They went up to Heaven and asked the King of Heaven, Phya Taen, to send a King down to build a town and govern it. When this was accomplished, the two hermits returned to their place in the Himalayan Mountains where the King of Heaven sent down Khun Boulom (or Borom) with his two wives Nang Yoma Phol and Nang Ek Kheng. They settled first at Na Noi Oi Nou, or Muong Thaeng, now known as Dien Bien Phu.

During this time Heaven and Earth had been connected by a large vine which shaded off the sunshine, which was why Khun Boulom asked Phya Thaen to cut down the vine. Since then, Heaven and Earth had been separated.

There were two gourds growing in the vine and Khun Boulom took an awl heated in hot charcoal and used it to bore a hole in one of the gourds. The Khamus came out first with their bodies black from the charcoal followed by the Khai Pai or Punoi, but because they did not wait for the hole to become larger before coming out, they were smaller than the others. The Khas walked out after that. Khun Boulom then used an axe to cut the second gourd, and this time, the Laotians came out. Since there was no hole to limit their size and no charcoal left to blacken them, these men were lighter in complexion than the rest. The story of men coming out from gourds is also believed by the Thai Dam people.

“In the beginning Phya Thaen (god) created men, animals, rice, plants etc. and put them into eight gourds. They were then brought down by Grandfather Poo Chao Thao Ngern and delivered

to Thao Sarng, who took it to Muang Lor. The other gourds were distributed to Vietnam, Muang Lee, Muang Lao, Muang Thai and Muang Yuon. Thao Sarng was married at Muang Lor and had a son called Lor. The latter was also married and had several children : Thao Luk, Thao Lao, Thao Lapli, Thao Lomli, Thao Langai, Thao Lang Kwang and Thao Lan Chuang. While they were sent to govern different countries the Thao Lan Chuang was posted at Muang Thaeng. All the Thai Dams descended from Thao Lan Chuang, who was governor of Muang Thaeng. Thus Man increased in numbers and different countries were founded, each with its own history and destiny. In fact this story indirectly corresponds to how the Thai race developed, similar to the story of Khun Boulom (or Borom) with his seven sons, who were sent out to establish and rule different kingdoms in this part of Asia.

Because legends were in abundance in the olden days, almost every old town had its own story to tell.

The Thai Khao's (white Thai) story of how they founded their town of Moc Chao went as follows: this town was formerly called in their own language Muang Khang (the steel town) which was later changed to Moc Chau by the Vietnamese when the latter conquered the country. Moc Chao was the town founded and settled by the Thai Khao. It was told that a Thai Khao general, who had a baby son who always cried, came to this region which had formerly belonged to a Kha tribe called Chuong. The general was very much annoyed and said sarcastically, "What do you want to eat now, swords and iron bars?" Having said this, he pushed a bar of steel into his son's mouth, but the miracle of miracles happened

when it melted in the water before even reaching the child's mouth. The general was very brave and led his army into Kha Chuong's region, killed the people and settled down there.

The general had seven magic swords which, when pointed at someone, were capable of killing that person. The general used these swords to win over all his enemies such as the Kha Chuong people. When he came to Moc Chau, his son had found a magic stone which he took with him everywhere. The stone grew alongside the child grew and was also capable of speaking. When the army arrived at the place, they asked the stone whether this was a good place to stay and when the stone agreed, they stopped and built a town there and named it Xieng Dee (meaning good town). They moved on to another place which was higher up on the crest of a mountain and asked the stone again what it thought of the place. This time the stone answered "Good to descend". Having heard this, they built a town there and called it "Chalong" (meaning about to descend and placed the stone there. It is still there now but is invisible unless danger is imminent.

The general moved on to Muang Khang which was situated on Vietnam's frontier. Having learned of his fame, the Vietnamese came to meet him and made friends with him. They expounded the religion of The Lord Buddha and tried to persuade him to have his seven swords melted down in order to mould an image of The Lord Buddha to which the general foolishly agreed to. Now left without a single form of self-defense, the Vietnamese easily seized the capital of Moc Chau and annexed it to the Vietnamese territory. After that, the name of Muang Khang (a Thai Khao name) was changed by

the Vietnamese to Moc Chau.

The historical legend of Namtha, on the other hand, was based on Nan. Its territory bordered on Muang Sai and they were dependent on Lanchang, whose King was called Chao Naraet Tafai. The prince who ruled Muang Nan was called Sutoh. The armies of the two princes met at Namtha and both sides thought of a way to decide on victory peacefully and decided to hold a pagoda-building competition where whoever finished first would be considered as winning the war and will be considered as the suzerain lord of the other. It turned out though that both pagodas were completed at exactly the same time, Sutoh's Wat Kohluang built in the west and Prince Naret Tafai's Wat Kohnoi in the east. Since it was impossible to choose a winner, they both had to plant a Bodhi tree by planting the top into the ground first, but both again grew together. Because of this, they both finally agreed to stop fighting, swore mutual friendship and divided the territory between themselves. When I visited Namtha, the villagers even pointed out the two pagodas built by Supoh and Naraet Tafai to me.

Historically, Namtha had the first ruling prince, Chao Luang Sutthisarn, who moved with his men from Nan and Hongsa, to settle down there. He had seven children the last two of whom were girls named Princess Sutharma and Princess Nanglah. The place where they had settled was annually flooded by the overflowing of the Namtha River which caused a great loss of lives of both men and cattle. Since the flood was caused by a hilly barrage in the river, the two princesses decided to save the men by taking out a boat and destroying the barrage themselves. But in so doing, they were

washed away by the rapids and killed. In memory of their heroism, people have built a spirit house for them and make offerings of a fine ox and a mother cow for them yearly. During this time of year, the entire village would feast for three days and would stop working altogether. Near to this spirit house was a pond and a forest where it was forbidden to fell trees or to catch fish from the pond since they were considered protected by the spirits of the two princes and therefore sacred.

The story of The Lord Buddha was sometimes mixed up with local legends. It was believed that The Lord visited them everywhere which resulted in the construction of a pagoda or a holy site. Sometimes he would leave his footprint for his people to worship.

The story of Muang Singh also had traces of Buddhism woven into it. The old site of this principality was at Xieng Khaeng on the upper Mekong River, founded about 500 years ago. Since the ruling prince at the time, the youngest son of the King of Xiengrung, was known to be a good-for-nothing, his father put him on a raft along with 100 male and 100 female slaves and floated them down the river as a punishment, where they reached land and named it Xieng Khaeng. Later the Prince of Xieng Khaeng went on a mission to Rangoon where its King gave him strands of The Lord Buddha's hair. Upon his return, he distributed these to various places of that region and built Buddhist temples in which to enshrine the holy relic.

11 kilometres north of Outay lies a village which contained The Lord Buddha's footprint. It was said that The Lord once visited this place but not a single man came out to pay their respects

to him. He then prophesised that this place was to become prosperous if governed by a woman since men did nothing but eat there. There was once a princess called Nang Yah Fah who was a very powerful ruler and she had led her army as far as Muoy Tchang (or Talang), annexing all of its territories. Another powerful princess who ruled after her, had sent out an elephant with gold bands around its tusks to Laichau, but it was shot by a hunter. This forced her to send in her army to conquer Laichau which was quite far away from her base.

Legends abounded the hilltribes of Laos, especially the Khas, who held many religious beliefs

The Kha Ta Oy will not eat deer and it is said that a Ta Oy hunter once came across a big egg in the forest which he brought back and kept at home. During this time, his bowl had always been filled with rice. One day, he was so curious as to what was inside the egg that he cracked it open to find a beautiful woman inside. He said, "Grandmother, what are you doing here?" but she did not reply. He then asked again, "Dear Mother or Dear Sister, what are you doing here?" but still received no answer from her. But only when he at last called out, "Dear wife" (or Ta Oy), did she understand him. They lived together until they had a son. Before she went off to work, she told her mother-in-law not to open the bowl which contained rice, but her curious mother disobeyed this completely, opened the lid to find some hay and fresh grass which was food for the animals. She knew straight away that her son's wife was an animal. When the young wife realised that the truth of her identity had been discovered, she turned into a deer and went off

into the forest. When the husband came back, his mother quickly told him about his wife being an animal but his son refused to believe her. He then followed his wife out into the forest one day and on the way came across a deer which he killed. When the boy was ready to take a bite off the roasted deer, he heard someone whisper, "Don't eat me, I'm your Mother!" and from that moment on, the husband, his son and the rest of the Kha Ta Oy people no longer ate deer because of their connection to it.

There is another story about another group of Kha people who had left the village of Nong Lom and came to Tamaleui. There were seven entrances into the village of Nong Lom. One night, a deer came round to the village and cried out seven times, a cry that was supposed to bring bad luck. The villagers got together and caught the deer and roasted it, but at seven o'clock, the deer came to life and started to run around the village seven times before disappearing into the forest. Later that night, an old woman came by to ask for her dog, which the villagers had never seen. The old woman was very angry and called them liars, accusing them of having roasted her beloved dog and not admitting to it. Later that night, there was a huge storm which wrecked the whole village, turning it into a giant lake. The villagers had to flee up to the mountains for their lives. You can still see the lake of Nong Lom which this whole story is all about.

The Kha Bit of Boun Neua will not eat wild chicken and it was said that one day an old man brought home a wild hen, roasted it and placed it on the roof. At night a wild cock came along and started talking to the chicken. The female said that when she is

reborn again as his wife before disappearing into the forest, only to be followed by the old man who brought her back. Before he ate her, drops of blood appeared on the eyes of his wife and she died. For this reason, the Kha Bit will not eat wild chicken.

The Khas greatly worshipped a heroic figure called Phra Sai who is supposed to be the King of Sai Setthatirrat who disappeared into the forest but was seen by the Kha people. It was recorded in history that King Sai Setthatirrat drowned in a shipwreck, but the Khas told us that he had magical powers and was able to walk through the waves and up to shore. One day Phra Sai called away all the children of the Kha village and turned them into stones and eggplants. The parents came back and threatened to kill Phra Sai who told them that if they wanted their children back then they should call out to them. When they did this, the children transformed from stones and eggplants to become their parents' children once again.

Phra Sai once built a pagoda in Attapeu because he had a wager with Phra Kru Ba Hu Yan Tang Ba. They both built a pagoda. Phra Sai made the Khas build Wat Tat and the Abbot Hu Yan Tang Ba made the Laotians build Wat Luang. The Abbot finished it first and Phra Sai was so angry with the Khas that he put a curse on them, saying that if they ever touched money they will be met with misfortune. From then on, the Khas would not touch money nor accept any. Legends such as these are told endlessly because both the Laos and the Khas are very superstitious people.

The Thai Dam also had their own literature. Their books are written on Sa or mulberry paper that is folded like an accordion.

Some of these books talked about historical subjects, the most important of which is the one on the history of their own race.

Some of the books also talk about astrology, traditional medicine, animistic beliefs, traditions and customs, but some exist in the form of novels borrowed from Chinese stories such as the girl who disguised herself as a boy travelling to the capital. She befriended a male classmate and never revealed her identity to him. Because she belonged to a rich family while her friend came from a more humble class, their marriage was opposed by her parents. In the end, they both died and met each other again as butterflies hovering over their own tombs. There is also a famous story about Wok Khai Hin, a monkey who accompanied a monk from China to India to introduce Buddhism to China. The stories are often full of miracles, similar to ancient Thai classics where Kings are often related to each other by marriage, to great serpents called Nagas who live under the sea.

Thai Dams, Thai Dangs and Thai Khaos all form one race as they hardly differ from one another except in the way they dress. They also live close to each other.

In the village of Banban adjoining the Vietminh territory, I found two very interesting books which belonged to a Thai Dang village chief. One is a story of a Ho chieftain, Phya Long and the other is a romantic story of a Thai prince Luiwi.

The Thai Khaos lived in the north of the Thai Dam and their centre is Laichau. One of their famous stories is about Nang Keneko, an old woman who found a golden mango and ate it, leaving the skin to her horse and the kernel to her parrot. Soonafter, all three

gave birth to a son each. The horse's son had wings to fly and the parrot's son could talk. As he grew up, Nang Keneko's son soon wanted to get married.

The young parrot then flew to a high tower where a king had hidden his daughter. When the parrot began to sing, it did so beautifully that the princess came out and talked with him. With the knowledge that its master was looking for a wife, the princess told it to introduce him to her. The young man thus came on the winged horse, married the princess and lived with her until they had a son together. One day when their son was crying, the King came round to find out why, only to discover that his daughter had escaped on a horse with her husband. He set the tower ablaze in anger, which separated the parrot from the young lovers because of the thick blanket of smoke. Meanwhile, the horse took the couple to a forest, where it was stolen in the middle of the night and brought to the King of a neighbouring country. The young man woke up and went in pursuit of his horse who had magical powers and would not eat grass that was brought by the keeper, for it lived only on fresh air. When the young man met the keeper with the horse, he volunteered to look after it and waited for his chance to escape with it to the place where he left his wife. Upon his return, though, she was no longer there. While out searching for some food, his wife had rested against a tree to discover that her hunger had suddenly disappeared. She knew immediately that this was a magic tree. She cut a branch and put it into her bag, went to a river, saw a Kha on a raft and asked him to row her across to the other side. But since the Kha tried to make her his wife, she tricked him onto land

to get some fruit for her. It was at this moment that she made her cunning escape. She arrived at a country whose King had just passed away and the ministers sacrificed their men as an act of respect for their King. When the ministers saw the princess using the magic stick to revive the dead men who were floating down the river, they asked her to bring the King back to life too. This wish was duly granted with the magical branch. The King now asked what he could do for her as a way of showing his gratitude for her, in which she told him that she wanted a high tower built in the middle of the pond with the pictures of a parrot and a flying horse hung up on top so that their reflections could be seen in the water. The King fulfilled this wish and a bridge was even built for her to cross to the tower. She then allocated guards to the bridge to keep a close watch on a man who would look up at the horse and the parrot on the top of the tower. In this way, she would be reunited with her husband.

Another form of Laotian literature is the courtship singing accompanied by music made by a reed-pipe called a Khene. The custom is for a young man to sing of his love to a lady in improvised rhymes. The ladies too would sometimes sing back in the same fashion, trying to oppose his sweet words and to tell them that he is full of false intentions. This art of courtship is called Molam and is similar to the Minesingers of Europe in the Middle Ages. This art is also practised across northeastern Thailand where training schools are plenty.

The Shans and the Ahoms

Mrs Leslie Milne in "the Shans at Home" used the word

Lao to mean the original Thai of Nanchao where the kingdom called Ngnai-Lao was later referred to just as Lao. But according to Mrs Milne, the Chiengmai people also called it Laos, however, not referring to the modern Laos. The word Laos as applied to the people of Laos is of a more recent origin and came about from a more political history because after half a century having been occupied by France, the French did not want the Thai group of modern day Laos to associate themselves with the Thai of Bangkok and therefore suggested a different name.

The Laos of Chiengmai and the original Thais seemed to have adopted a different script before Sukothai and Ayudhya. This script had very little connected with the Cambodian alphabets but had closer links with the Mons of Dvaravati's cursive style of writing. This scripture spread along with the literature of the Shans of northern Burma and to the Ahoms of Assam, as is evident of the fact that King Mengrai of Chiensen built Chientung in the Shan States in 1262. Previously, the country was inhabited by the wild Laws tribe. Chiengmai was of course nearer to the Mon country of Pegu than Bangkok, a place that was completely unknown in those days.

The Laos of Lannathai and the Shans had many things in common such as their literature being rich in folklore. This kind of literature was called "Chak-chak-wong-wong" stories in the south because the heroes always had names which ended with either Chak or Wong. It always told the story of a prince hero who had been endowed with magical powers and who goes through a lot of adventures and overcomes great feats in order to save a beautiful prin-

cess whom he later marries. They are then separated only to be happily reunited through rescue efforts from either powerful hermits, the King of heaven, Indra or Sakaya in Shan. Details of the story varied and supernatural beings like devas, apsaras, kinnarees, yakshasas, were always included in these stories. But our heroes knew how to conquer them with magical weapons and, especially, with powerful bows and arrows given to them either by hermits or by the Sakaya.

Many of these stories are similar to those of modern day southern Thailand, only with certain variations. The Buddhist religion also helped to make the literature of these two cultures similar, such as the Jataka tales which are to be found profusely in Shan literature where the story of The Lord Buddha also found a place among the tales. It was told in Shan folklore that Gautama Buddha once grew tired of searching for the truth and returned to his palace where he resumed life as a layman. In the palace, he saw Sakaya in the form of a squirrel trying to drain a big lake by dipping its tail in the water and shaking the water off on land. When the prince saw this, he asked, "Little squirrel, what are you doing?" to which the squirrel replied, "I am going to drain the lake". The prince then said, "How can you drain the water by dipping your tail in it and shaking water droplets on land? The lake is so large while your tail is so small."

The squirrel then said "I am not easily discouraged like Prince Guatama who returned to his palace because he believed to have failed in his quest for the truth after having only tried to do so for a short while." Feeling ashamed, the prince resumed his search

and never ceased to do so until he at last became The Enlightened One.

There are also echoes of the stories of Phra Rot and Merie, Manohra and the Golden Goby in Shan literature. Compare the following story with Phra Rot and Merie.

The story of the twelve sisters

A long time ago there were twelve maidens who were the daughters of a man who lived in the forest. One day, when their tank of water supply dried up, the sisters went in search of fish that were stranded in the mud where each sister managed to catch one. In those days, monks did not exist yet as Buddhism had not yet arrived to this part of the region. However, there were holy men who tried to seek for the truth and one of them, while wandering in the forest, taught the sisters not to take life. The maidens did not take any heed of his teaching and killed the fish that they had caught by weaving a string through the eyes of each. The youngest sister, however, decided that she would not kill her fish, but keep it alive in a jar of water as a pet instead, so she wove the string through one of the fish's eye only so that it would live.

Years went by and the sisters died and were reborn as children of a village headman. When they grew up, the headman who wished to please the King, gave him his twelve daughters as a present. The King accepted them and brought them to the palace where they lived happily as his wives.

It so happened that there was famine in the country of the ogres and travellers who often lost their way and came wandering

into the unknown country would become prisoners of the ogres who devoured them. For sometime, no travellers dared to pass by this country and the long fangs of the ogres started to fall off from their mouths from lack of human flesh to eat. When all these eventually came off, the ogres became men. Worried that he too might turn into an ordinary man, the ogre king sought for the advice of his favourite wife as to how to look after his fangs so that they would not fall off. The hideous-looking ogress queen who had longer fangs than those of her husband's, promised that she will find him some food. She bathed herself in a magic pool that was filled with water from a magical spring and transformed into a beautiful girl of about seventeen years old. In this form, she went to the village of men where the village headman, the father of the twelve wives of the King lived. She lodged herself in the house of a widow. So fair now was the ogress that all the youths in the village desired to marry her and one day besieged her house. Seeing this, the headman began to laugh at them all as the girl's beauty was so great that he knew that she would be a fitting wife only for a King and not for anyone else of lesser nobility. The King brought her back to the palace and made her his favourite wife.

The twelve sisters were displeased at this and became very jealous, quarrelling all the time with the new wife. The ogress queen sat still and considered the matter, for she knew that she must work secretly, as she would certainly lose to the twelve sisters should there be a fight among them. One night she stole one eye from the youngest sister and both eyes from all the rest. Then, by exerting all her worldly powers, made it contract, so that the ogre country

came up close to her. She then carried the eyes to the ogre's palace and put them in one of the garden's twelve compartments and returned to bed before the break of dawn. The sisters had been asleep all this time so when she had stolen their eyes, she woke the King up (being his favourite wife she knew that he would not be angry with her), and told him that his wives were witches, and that their longing for human flesh had probed them to gouge out their own eyes and eat them. The King was horrified and, upon seeing that his other wives really were blind, ordered them to leave the palace and the village at once.

Because there were no houses or huts beyond the village, the sisters took refuge in a big cave which was divided into twelve compartments. The youngest sister, who could still see with the one eye she had left, went into the forest everyday in search of roots as well as fruit and nuts for herself and her sisters. But after some time, since her sisters were not content with just fruit and nuts but also longed for some meat, they made a pact that if one was to give birth to a baby they would share it amongst themselves.

At last when the baby of the eldest sister was born, it was immediately rationed out among the sisters as promised. When the youngest sister received her share however, she did not eat it but cunningly hid it somewhere instead, so that when her own baby is born, she can give it to her sisters and pretend that it is her own child's flesh. When finally she gave birth to a child, she began to pass around the meat without her sisters' knowledge that it did not come from her own baby's. Her sisters were not at all suspicious since the baby was also easy to hide because it never cried. For

seven days, the mother nursed her baby who was looked after and fed by twelve sparrows that took turns to feed it three times a day. Holymen came on the seventh day and touched the child with a magic wand, turning it into a tall and beautiful fifteen-year-old. In reality, this child was an embryo form of The Lord Buddha or Bodhisatva, which was why he was revered by all.

Sakaya, the King of Heaven, also came and gave him a magic jackstone. For this reason, when he went to the village and played with the other village boys, he always beat them at the game and was able to take all their jackstones away from them. When the other boys tried to buy them back again, he refused to at first but afterwards made a deal that if he gave them back their jackstones, they would bring him twelve portions of rice, twelve portions of curry and twelve gourds filled with water in exchange.

This strange request reached the ears of the King who had already heard of the boy's intelligence and was touched by his uniqueness in not demanding for money but for food instead. He began to think of his twelve wives and ordered that the boy be brought to the palace. When he came, the boy played the game of jackstones with the King and his ministers and won every game, but everytime he won, he refused to take money, instead he made the same request of twelve portions of rice, twelve portions of curry and twelve gourds filled with water. These were given to him everyday, which he in turn carried over to his mother and to her sisters. The King grew so fond of the boy that he dressed him in beautiful clothes, gave him the title of a prince and allowed him to live in his palace.

When the ogress queen heard of the lad's intelligence and how he always asked for the same amount of food, she guessed that he may be the son of the youngest sister. She had hoped that the King's twelve wives would have been dead by now, but realised to her greatest agitation that they were still alive. Plotting against him, she said to the boy, "You are now a young prince, but you are not well-educated, which makes you no better than a poor village boy. I shall give you a letter to my father who is a powerful King. Once you've arrived in his country, you can acquire a good education as befits a young prince." The ogress queen then wrote a letter and tied it around his neck which the uneducated boy was not able to read. The note read, "You may kill and eat this boy. Devour him from head to toe so that not one single cell in his body is left behind." She lied to the boy that she had asked her father to give him a good education and to give him elephants as presents. The boy rode off on his horse.

The boy went into the forests of the Himalayas where he stopped outside the cave of a hermit and slept from extreme exhaustion. The hermit too had been sleeping but as he was a very holy man, was able to sense that he had a visitor and went out to find the boy sleeping on the ground. He noticed the letter around his neck and read it. When he realised that the letter was addressed to the ogre king and instructed him to kill and eat the lad, he was very much saddened at the boy's shortcomings. So he wrote another letter saying that as soon as the prince had reached the ogre's country, to marry him to the King's daughter. This will make him a highly honourable individual.

When the prince awoke, he continued with his journey without any knowledge of what had been done to the letter. When he reached his destination, he was surrounded by ogres who would have killed if not for the content on the letter. He was brought to the palace where he was told by the King that he would give him his daughter to be his wife. But because the ogres were rather frightening in appearance, the King and all of his courtmen, including his daughter, bathed themselves in the magic pool. Thus when the prince saw them, he believed them to be beautiful creatures. According to custom, the ogre King had to give up his throne to his new son-in-law for seven days.

The palace was surrounded by a wonderful garden that was divided into twelve parts. There was one for flowers, one for trees, one for fountains, one for still waters where pink, white and blue lotus flowers grew and one was for wild beasts. I do not recall the other divisions but I know that there were wonderful things to be found in all twelve of them.

In one of them was what was known as the urn of life because it contained the breath of life from all of the ogres. In another, there was a bow and arrow whose strings were made from body fibres taken from the ogres. When any ogre was in danger, the strings would become taut, signalling to the others that one of their friends was in danger. In another part of the garden a magic flower was to be found. This, when thrown to the ground, was capable of making three great mountains emerge from underneath. In another garden, there was an even more powerful flower that was capable of making the Himalayas emerge. A third flower had the power to

bring fire from the underworld up to Earth. This fire was so wild that an entire army will perish in its flames. There was also a magic root that, once left in water, will help the person who pours this water over his eyes to know the truth behind everything. He would be able to see through an impostor for example. There was also a flying horse with magic stirrups that could carry its rider wherever he wanted to go.

Taking a leisurely stroll with his bride in the garden, the prince secretly remembered all these magic things. He was lucky enough to have his ogre wife love him for who he was, so much so that she told him everything. She even showed him the magic pool and told him that if the blind bathed their eyes in it, their eyesight will be restored. The young and down-to-earth ogress loved him to such an extent that she even told the prince that he was really living amongst a family of ogres.

The prince then thought things through but did not say anything because he was a bright fellow. As they walked in the garden they came across a huge marble slab covered with multi-coloured moss which resembled a soft carpet. While resting on this carpet, the prince secretly went to the different gardens once the ogress fell asleep, where he began stealing the eyes from the pond, the magic flowers, the bow and arrow and some water from the pool. He then mounted on the flying horse and escaped from the ogress back to his own country.

When the ogress awoke, she missed her husband so desperately and started to run from one compartment of the garden to the next in her vain search of him. At first she only thought that it was

he who was missing, but soon realised that things from the garden were also missing. She immediately knew that he had left her and because she loved him so much, the garden was soon transformed into a desert. Determined to follow him, she transformed herself back into the form of an ogress and pursued him. She went so fast that she caught up with the flying horse and said to her husband, "Take me, your little sister, with you!" to which he replied, "I cannot take you with me, go back to your father!" She called out to him again saying, "How can I leave you? I must follow you in life and in death!" He then turned and dropped the first flower, which made three great mountains emerge between them. The ogress, however, managed to cross all of them and still followed him. He then dropped the second flower where seven huge mountains as high as the Himalayas emerged, but this did not deter her from crossing them either. In the end, he simply implored her to go back for if she continued to follow him, he would die. When she refused to listen to his pleas, he dropped the third flower and the land was covered in flames.

She then cried out, "The love in my heart is hotter than any fire!" and perished in the flames. At last the prince was able to return home safely where he stopped by at the palace to greet the King before going back to the cave to see his mother. He washed his eyes with the magic water and also gave it to his mother and her sisters in order for them to regain their eyesight. The prince returned to the King and told him about his adventure, including everything about his Queen and how she turned out to be an ogress. The King was furious to hear his beautiful wife referred to by such

an offensive name, so the prince put drops of water that the magic root had been soaked in into the King's eyes. The Queen had been sleeping in a room of twelve cubits long. When the King raised the curtain to enter, he stopped in horror and saw the huge ugly ogress lying on the floor before him. Terrified, the King exclaimed, "Oh, my son! Save me from her for I am extremely horrified!"

The prince took the magic bow and pulled the string which woke up the ogress up from her slumber. As he pulled the strings tighter, she was thrown to the ground in agonising convulsions of pain. The prince took the urn and hurled it to the ground and as it broke, the breath of life of all the ogres was released, causing not only her to die but all the rest of the ogres too. From then on, not a single ogre was to be seen again.

Meanwhile, the King called out to his servants, "Go and bury her in the valley beyond this village."

Because she was so large, they had to cut her into small pieces and carry her to the valley to be buried. On the way, they could not help dropping her bones, which was scattered all over the valley and eventually turned it into a mountain. When they threw her head into a lake in this valley, it became an island. Meanwhile, the King had brought back his twelve wives to live with him and welcomed the prince who was his long lost son.

The story about the witch

Now read the following story and see whether there is a resemblance with the Thai story about the golden goby.

A long time ago, there lived a Shan King who was lord of

the golden palace and had two wives. While the chief Queen was loveable, the second wife was a witch. One day, while fishing by the stream near the palace, the King and Queen had put the fish that they had caught into little baskets. The evil witch, however, secretly came and ate them all. In the evening, the King was surprised to see that there was not much fish to eat at the dinner table. At this, his second wife took the opportunity to deceive him by saying, "Your queen is a witch. I saw her eating some of the fish while they were still alive."

Believing this, the King ordered that the Queen be killed immediately. Because the law stated that no witches were allowed to live in the land, she was duly killed and was reincarnated as a royal turtle who lived in the stream near the palace.

When the witch heard about this, she was determined to have her killed again. Since she was now the King's main wife, whatever she said had a significant influence on the King. One day, she made some parched rice and put the grains under her quilt. She then called upon the King and threw herself restlessly onto her bed crying, "Oh, my bones are in terrible pain! Find me a golden turtle to eat or I shall die!" Hearing the crackling of the rice and thinking that it really was the sound of her aching bones, the King ordered his courtmen to go in search of a golden turtle for his wife straight away.

The King's marriage to his first wife had given him a daughter who happened to have overheard her father's orders. Not wanting her mother to be slain, she ran to the stream and called out to her, "Mother! Mother! They are coming to catch you and feed you

to the witch! Quick! Hide if you can!"

To this, her mother replied, "I will try to hide, my child, but if they kill me, promise me you won't eat me but you will take my bones and bury them away from the city instead."

When the King's men started to empty the stream in their search for the turtle, she desperately tried to escape, but when the river was eventually drained of water, she was eventually captured. Tying her leg to a bamboo pole, they carried her back to the palace.

In the meantime, the witch had prepared a pot of water over a fire and gave out orders to put the turtle into the pot. When the little princess was left in charge of fanning the fire, she took great pity on her mother and pulled her out from the pot as fast as she could. When the Queen found out about this, she was beaten and driven back to tend to the fire properly. After three unsuccessful attempts to save her mother, the turtle finally said, "Do as you are told my child and let me die."

When the water came to a boil, the little princess cried out, "Mother, are you in pain?" to which she replied, "Yes my little girl, but remember your promise and bury my bones where I asked you to." After these words, the golden turtle died.

That night, the witch invited her friends over to feast on the turtle. They all came round to enjoy the delicious meal. Meanwhile, the little princess had been waiting to collect her mother's bones which the diners had thrown onto the floor so that she may bury them where her mother had asked her to.

That night, a tree had grown where the bones had been buried and an invisible spirit was seen on its branches singing. She

sang so sweetly that those who walked past the tree would stop to listen to her.

When the King was told about this, he gave out to have the tree moved into the garden in his palace.

One night, the spirit transformed herself into a Queen and stood by the King's bedside, watching him while he was asleep. As a custom, she waited for him to wake up before she began speaking to him. "King, do you remember me? I was your first wife!"

Elated, the King said, "Actually, you do bear a great resemblance to her, but to fully convince me, you must show me which clothes and jewels belonged to my first wife." When she did this correctly, the King was certain that this woman really was his first wife and told her to come and live with him again.

Now that she has resumed her title as the first wife, the witch once more became the minor Queen. Furious, she was determined to seek her revenge on the little princess by preparing a potful of boiling water and saying to her, "I have dropped my betel box under the house through the hole in this bamboo floor. Will you run down and fetch it for me?" Not suspecting that the witch could be up to something, she happily went down to retrieve the betel nut box only to have the witch pour boiling hot water on her, scalding her to death.

All this time though, the King had been looking out his window and had witnessed the whole drama. He had now come to realise how the witch had been deceiving him and gave orders for her to be killed and be fed to the dogs.

She was reborn as a flea in her next life that wandered about

restlessly on the bodies of the dogs that had eaten her in her previous life.

The Fairy and the Hunter

There are traces of the Manohra story woven into this tale that was read by the Shans. A hunter once saved the life of a crocodile who was in turn very grateful for his action. One day, seven fairies came down to bathe in the lake from their home in the silver mountain up in Heaven. When the hunter saw them, he went to the crocodile for advice for he had seen the youngest sister and wanted her for his wife. The crocodile gave him a length of magic rope that was ordained with precious stones to help make his wish come true. When the seven fairies returned to bathe in the lake, he threw this rope around them and caught them all. They all wept at having become his prisoners and begged the hunter to release them. When he ignored their plea, they made a compromise with him.

“Take our eldest sister and let the rest of us go.” When the hunter refused, they went on, “Take our second sister then and let the rest of us go.” Again, the hunter refused and said, “I will only have the youngest of your sisters.”

At last, they gave their little sister away and flew up to Heaven with their hearts weighing extremely heavy from having had to part with her.

Although the youngest sister was now with the hunter, she was not at all happy and her mind was constantly elsewhere. She said to herself, “Who can save me from my plight, I wonder?”

When she arrived at the hunter’s house, he tied her to a pil-

lar in the middle of the living room where they suddenly saw a ray of light emitted from her. The hunter's wife was so frightened that she would not eat any rice nor drink water that was offered to her, nor did she answer when spoken to. She was scared especially of the the light that was emitted from her, so bright that it illuminated the house. The hunter too was so afraid that he finally decided to take the fairy to the palace and give her back to the King's son. At first, he was so sad as his love for her was greater than the Sun's power. So great, in fact, that she eventually forgot about her sisters and her home back on the silver mountain.

Shan literature was supposed to be very rich. Books made from palm leaves on Shan literature were found aplenty especially in temples and homes. The Shans delighted themselves in listening to these stories which were usually recounted by a narrator who would be surrounded by a circle of attentive listeners.

Their literature first came from Laos which in turn was influenced by the Burmese during the days of Alaungpaya. These stories began to take over Burmese stories. In the north, they were in close contact with the Mao Shans who adopted some of their stories from the Chinese. Apart from religious and worldly stories, the Shans used to have a huge archive of historical books that were practically lost or destroyed during the war. Two or three brief chronicles, however, still exist. Like the French colonisers, the Burmese overlords did not encourage the study of Shan history for fear that the Shans might indentify themselves with the Thais and therefore make it difficult for them to join the Burmese Union. This

is indeed very sad for the history of the Shans since we know so little about it as it is.

The Ahoms, on the other hand, were warriors who were very proud of their history. They were historically-minded and had records of almost all aspects of their history. Their literature, therefore, was very rich in historical events called Buranjis. Since they came into contact with the Hindus, their literature was influenced by the Hindus while their writing was still identifiable with the Laotians. The Ahoms believed that it is the duty of all gentlemen to study the history of their ancestors. The Ahoms were rulers in the Brahmaputra River basin from 1228 to 1826. Since the British annexed the Assams with the Ahoms with greater India, the language and culture of India became predominant, lessening the importance of the Ahom language until it eventually became a dead language. It is still, however, spoken by the Ahoms and Assams inhabiting the region. Their 600-year rule influenced and enriched modern Assamese, which developed from Sanskrit and Magadha. Ahom was a language spoken by the rulers who came to Assam in 1228. As the people were Assams and Hindus, the Ahom rulers had to give up their former religion which was Buddhism and took on another one which was Hindu. The Ahom language, however, was not adopted by everyone in the country. Because their rulers had all the official records of the different reigns in that country, we are very privileged to have a complete record of their history as reference. These numerous records on different reigns, on distinguished nobles or religious establishments were known as Buranjis.

The Ahom kings unified the country, discarding different

classes and tribes and gave their country a strong government so that it would flourish economically and culturally. The Ahoms soon become the protectors of Hinduism. With their strong rule, they defended their land from Mohammedan invasions and managed to maintain peace in their country. Under many rulers, literature soon flourished in the land as poets were often invited to court. Apart from the Buranjis in Ahom language, though, Assamese poetry, folklore, dramas and other forms of poetic compositions also developed in large numbers. Strangely enough, there was also a story about Sri Tanonchai, the crafty man who always deceived others with his intelligent play on words among these folktales. The story was called "Teton". Compare the following with that of Thailand's Sri Tanonchai.

Because of his impertinence and disrespect for his elders, Teton is finally driven out of his house. After wandering about on his own for sometime, he joined two thieves in breaking into a house at nighttime, where he beat on a drum. This resulted in them being caught and thus taken to the King's court. On the way, the villager was so exasperated with the two unruly scamps that he shouted, "If somebody would stop them with just a blow!" With that, Teton slapped him. The man tied him up with a rope and went to the King's court where they found an old woman selling bananas.

"Give a piece of coin for a bunch, then give me a kick and go on your way," she said. Teton took her words literally and kicked her. Infuriated, the woman too marched over to court.

Teton's answer to his first charge was, "Would a thief beat on a drum in a house which he'd just broken into? I only wanted some chira so I grabbed it. The Tamuli Phukan, the King's Minister then said, "This man here wanted someone to stop his unruly behaviour with one stroke (a slap) which was why he did it. His words are worth a thousand rupees". To his charge, Teton replied, "I did exactly what the woman had told me to do. The Tamuli Phukan then said, "His words are worth a lakh of rupees". The King acquitted the lad of all his charges. After a few days, Teton came to the King and told him that the Tamuli Phukan now owed him a hundred thousand and a lakh of rupees for he said it outloud not long ago. "You must mean what you say," he reminded the minister. The King had no way of defending himself.

Taking the money in two baskets, he took his stand at the Minister's gate and shouted, "If anyone gives me a meal for my thoughts, I will give him all this money."

At the insistance of her maid-servant, the Tamuli Phukan's daughter, Champa, had invited him over. To satisfy this fastidious lad, she bathed him and fed him with her own two hands. Having been given the money, he went back to the King and asked a few questions: "My Lord, who was it that placed a seat for someone and asked him to sit down? Who was it that bathed and fed someone with her own two hands? Who was it that kept someone's money for him?" To all the questions, the King's answer was, "Why, it must be the wife. But what is the meaning of this?" Teton said, "My Lord, please ask the Tamuli Phukan's daughter." The King understood everything and, after having calmed down, said to his

irate Minister: "Tamuli Phukan, this is an exceptionally clever lad. He will make the perfect husband for Champa, so let him marry her."

Teton became the Tamuli Phukan's son-in-law and the King made him a Tamuli next in rank to his father-in-law.

If considering literature as a whole, despite the different languages of the subjects of the Ahom rulers, Assamese literature was very rich, for the Ahom rulers brought a new element into it and increased its richness. This element is the serious King of the prose form, the facts of history and culture. But we are here concerned with the Ahom language which is a branch of the Shan group.

According to Mr. S.K. Bhuyan, the Director of historical and antiquarian studies in Assam, he estimated that there are about 150 chronicles existing now. This number can be added to personal possessions. He mentioned that during the reign of the Ahom King, Rajeswar Singha, 1751-1769, a large number of chronicles were destroyed by his chief executive officer Kirtichandra as they were suspected of having references to his ignominious descent. The depredations of the Moamarias, the Bengal burkenduzes and of the Burmese which preceded British occupation of Assam in 1824, had led to the disruption and the depopulation of the country which were responsible for the loss of many chronicles. The existing chronicles may be roughly divided into the following classes.:

1. Chronicles dealing with the events of the Ahom period. They were written in the Ahom language, the language of the Shan conquerors of the province. Some of them were written in verse, but most were written in prose. We have here sidelights on

the activities of Mogul generals and emperors as far as they have some bearings on Assamese history.

2. Chronicles narrating the history of other countries besides Assam. There are chronicles dealing with Burdwan, Kashmir and the affairs of Muhammedan India, all of which were in prose. The object of their chronicles was the enlightenment of their countrymen about neighbouring and remote territories. A chronicle of Tripura, written in 1724 has already been published by the Assam government from a manuscript that was deposited in the British Museum.

3. Fragmentary chronicles. Dealing with particular episodes, events, tribes or monographs, for example, the desultory of ancient Kamarupa, the Kacharis, Chutias and Jayantias and the metrical history of the Raja of Darrang. There is also a manuscript which contains an account of the tribute paid by the Ahoms to the Mussulmans after the defeat of the former by Mir Jumla in 1663.

4. Katak Buranjis, or chronicles of diplomatic embassies, dealing with foreign relations of Assam. They contain, besides other facts, accounts of receptions accorded to the ambassadors of Assam and of foreign courts in their posts. They also contain copies of diplomatic epistles, though these letters are occasionally inserted in other Buranjis to illustrate the context.

5. Vangsavalis or family chronicles. Most of these families were of considerable influence and importance and their history throws ample light on the general political history of Assam. The Vangsavali of the baniya-Kakati family contains several references to the activities of Raja Ram Singha in Assam.

6. Satria Buranjis were chronicles of the various religious monasteries or histories of their founders and prominent pontiffs. They were highly interesting as their relationship with Kings, under whose patronage they were usually established and maintained, have a significant bearing on the political history of Assam.

The historical and literary value of these chronicles is immense and they were compiled primarily under official supervision with the help of court minutes, despatches of local governors and of commanders engaged in military operations. Noble families also took part in them and contributed their own knowledge to highlight the history of their own families. Dates are recorded at frequent intervals, including the time of the day. The accuracy of these Buranjis has been a matter of amazement since the correspondence that was left by foreign visitors only point out the fact that history in Assam really was a branch of the sacred scriptures where intentional misrepresentation was not only a crime but a sin. Their value was as great as monuments of Assamese prose and their conservation of the customs, manners, ideals, feelings and aspirations of the Ahom people placed them in the highest category in the representation of national literature.

Reading through the Ahom-Buranji, one will be able to learn about the many customs, rites and the way of living of people in the olden days. The earliest Ahom Kings received their divine rights from the supreme god Indra to govern his people so that there will be no social injustice. Among these customs were the law controlling sexual desires and the prohibition of adultery and incest which could be quoted here as an example.

“If anyone oppress others, he should be exiled. If he wants to redeem himself, he should sacrifice three white buffaloes, four white oxen and some pigs to the Gods. He should also hold a feast with cows and buffaloes. He should make offerings of gold and silver to the Deodhai Pundits where he must ask everyone’s pardon by kneeling kown in front of them. All his belongings are to be confiscated and he should also greet you (the King), only then will he be cleared of his sin. If anybody robs his mother or if an elder brother takes his younger brother’s wife as his own, no-one should associate themselves with that person again. If someone happens to come across such an individual, he should cast his eyes up to the sky. If anybody commits rape on his daughter-in-law or his brother’s wife, his heart should be stabbed with a knife. Such sinners are not to be looked at and if they are not put to death, they should be exiled into a jungle infested with tigers and bears. If you wish to make such a person innocent, you must collect all the people in form Lengdon (Indra) by sacrificing ten cows. All the holy things are collected there. The culprit should kneel down before the heavenly King and a feast should be given by killing cows and buffaloes. Gifts should be offered to all. The culprits should be forced to drink a certain amount of water with which Shengdeo has been washed. Then he should perform the “Rikkhvan” ceremony (a religious ceremony performed to get a new life), after which he should be stripped off his garments and made to walk around naked. If a person weds someone from his own family, he should not be allowed to go with impunity. In order to cleanse a man of such a sin, Gods should be worshipped by sacrificing three cows and some

buffaloes. After this the Deodhai Pundits will bring holy water and offer nine mehengas (stands full of offerings) to the Gods. In order to purify the culprits, the pundits should sprinkle holy water on his body and his clothes should be taken off so that he is forced to walk around naked. He should relate his crime to as many people as possible. Anybody mingling with a sinner may be cleared of his sin if he offers a feast by killing cows and buffaloes. Those person who kidnap women and usurp other's property or who rape their own mothers, their brother's wives and their daughter -in-laws are put to death." The sacrifice of animals to purge them of their sins is an ancient custom practised by the Ahoms and is still practised among some of the tribes in remote areas. The Thai Dams of Tongking are animists and also perform these sacrifices. These sacrifices can now even be seen in Bangkok carried out by the Brahmins.

Since historical records during the Sukothai period were scarce, we have to depend on stone inscriptions made by the Ahoms to learn about the history of the time which gave account of the days during their invasion into Assam in 1228 in great detail. This included various names and places that were of relevance as well as the last day of their independence when they were finally annexed by the British in 1838. This was when their last King, Purandar Simha, was dethroned and a governor, Mr. Bordie, was appointed in his place. According to the Ahom Buranji, we discovered that the founder of the Ahom Kingdom in Assam was Shukapha, son of Chao-Changnyeu and Queen Blakkhamsheng, who ruled in Muangrimuangram (Muong Pong or Mogaung) and who had a younger brother called Shukhanpha. When the King died,

Shukhanpha succeeded the throne.

“In that same year, Shukapha the great, having consulted with his grandfather, migrated westwards, leaving the country under the rule of his brother, Shukhanpha. His vassals were one Khunba, Khunphrang, one Khunring, one Khunsheng and one Khunphuken and with them, he went to his father’s country, Muangkhamungja, took with him the idol of Shen (Shengden) and brought with him three thousand Matangs (cooking pots). The great King Shukapha had also brought with him a single-tusked elephant named Khamkhamung, a female elephant named Chukinkat, an elephant keeper named Phrangpem and three hundred horses which were blindfolded. Shukapha the great proceeded down quickly by trampling on the ruling chiefs of the places on his way. He arrived at Katrungmungban and advanced on to Mungnamungti. Arriving at Hatikhokia Naga Village, he moved onto Chakchangkhrai and then to Shanke. The great King Shukapha left the place and arrived at Daikaorang (a collection of nine hills) where he rested. Here Shukapha ordered his chief to conquer the Nagas of the upper and lower countries. The Nagas of Papuk, Tengkhm, Khunkhat, Khuntung, Tangching and Jakhang villages fought and killed a large number of Nagas and held many in captive. Some Nagas were cut into pieces and their flesh was cooked. The brutal King made a man eat the flesh of his elder brother and a father eat his son’s flesh. Shukapha destroyed the Naga villages. Afraid that they too will be harmed, the inhabitants of the other villages finally gave in. The Shukapha expressed his wish to leave Daikaorang.”

He moved on to build his city at Charaideu where he died in

1268 after forty-one years in reign. His successors established a firm rule over the whole of Assam but they had to fight with so many enemies. The Buranji contained full and interesting accounts of the wars that broke out during the different reigns, including war against the Chutiars, the Kacharis, the Nagas and the Koches etc. The most dramatic of invasions was that of the Mohammedans from Bengal and from Moghul of India, but they managed to salvage their independence. The following is an example of the fierce battle with the Mohammedans:

“In 1619 in the month of Dinshipit, the heavenly King (Chaopha Shushengpha) sent Labo Barua etc. to fight against the Musulman General, Mirjanathul who was living in a fort. Our army marched against Mirjanathul, approached the fort that was occupied by the enemy and halted near to it where they erected a stockade. One day when Mirjanathul sieged our fort, our men were forced to fire and shoot arrows at them. They retreated and went back to their fort. Our army then counter-attacked the enemy and tried to break into their wall of defence. The Musulmans then defended their fort with their bodies so that we could not seize it. The next morning, they came out of their fort on horses and on elephants, catching our garrison on unawares. We attacked them violently from both sides. A great number of Musulmans were cut into pieces and many were speared to death. The Musulmans suffered a heavy loss in this battle and they eventually fled in ships down the river Tilao (Lohit) and stopped at Hajo. Our men seized their possessions which included two brass cannons, eight large cannons, twenty-seven handguns, twenty-five flint guns, a Mehenga (a king of stand), seven

swords with gilded handles, a saddle, seven cows, two stools, a dagger, a jar, a drum, three iron cooking vessels, a pair of shields, sixty horses, twenty buffaloes and forty oxen.

The following illustrates how the tributes were paid by the Koches to Shushengpha in 1620: "The descendants of the Kock King (names enumerated) came to our King where they had brought with them six shields with brass signets, a gilded sword and three hundred and sixty Srirampur hoes as tributes. They fell prostrate at the feet of Chaopha Shusheng and offered these at the royal palace at Garhgaon on the day, Daprao. The heavenly King ordered one Rangachila to take the offering by the frontier Rajas, gave them presents in return and sent them to fight with the Musulmans." The ones who refused to pay their respects were arrested and put to death along with the rest of their family. This happened to Tipam Raja who refused to pay his respects to Shuchingpha, the Ahom King. In order to develop a friendship between them, a princess was handed over to him in marriage, but this could also happen when the Moghul King wanted to keep a hostage for the fidelity of the Ahom King by taking away his daughter so as to add to the harem. Here is the completed version of the treaty of friendship.

"In 1584 the Koch King sent Phubankuruki and Hu Luhkat to Chaopha Shukham with the proposal to offer his sister called Shao-Kala to the heavenly King as an act of friendship. Chaopha Shukham sent two elephants named Bantak and Nangkham and two horses named Janglung and Bang with our men Lasham, a son of one Nimita and Bamunlung to settle the marriage with Shao-Kala. Our men went with Bhubankuruki and Hu Luhkat who handed

the dowry to Bhubankuruki and Hu Luhkat before departing. The King again gave them two elephants called Plai and Tunphrung as well as twelve horses. Then Bhubankuruki and Hu Luhkat came back to our King who was at Sina-Chaopha Shukham, rounded up elephants and horses in great numbers and gave twenty two elephants and sixty horses to the Koch King." Here is a marriage ceremony of an Ahom prince.

"A marriage contract was made between the King's son, Saring Raja and the daughter of Chapaguria Burbarua. For nine days, the bride and the bridegroom's bodies were washed with water collected from the river (Bhogdai). There was a large number of entertainment including the beating of drums and the blowing of horn. At the end of nine days, the marriage ceremony is performed where everyone is treated to a banquet of fried rice (Chira), curd and molasses."

Under a weak King, however, the Ahoms did not escape from Burmese destruction as was the case with Ayudhya. The Ahom King left one of his chief ministers in charge who had a quarrel with another minister, the Burphukan. The latter escaped to ask for the help of the Burmese who came and conquered the country in 1816. "A bloody battle took place which lasted an entire night which resulted in the Mingimahabandhula taking over the Burmese. Our King Chandrakanta, having been defeated, retreated and took shelter in Bengal. The Burmese began to plunder our cities and villages and many people left their homes and took shelter in the forests instead. The Burmese even used to invade the forests for days and nights on end where they burnt down many villages. Three or four

of them would rape a woman, sometimes ten would rape one at a time. Old women, young ones and even girls would be raped so severely that they would bleed. They destroyed our people and held many of us captive. The dead ones were brought back to their fort.” However, despite all this, the arrogance and aggression displayed by the Burmese caused them their own destruction.

“In the course of time, the Burmese soon invaded the British frontier provinces. When news of the invasion reached the Governor-General, he sent an army to punish them in a rage. Unable to overpower them, the Burmese soon retreated and took shelter in the city of Jorhat, but were closely followed by the enemy. Obligated to attack, the Burmese sustained a heavy loss of men and left Jorhat for Rangpur, after having set fire to the house and forts in Jorhat. Colonel Richard then advanced north and arrived at Gaurisagar where they gave the enemy a severe blow, resulting in a large number of their men being killed. After this, Colonel Richard ordered his army to attack the Burmese troops in Rangpur where the British army finally overpowered their enemy. After Senapati Phukan signed a treaty with Colonel Richard, he and his army together with the rest of his people left Burma to be held under British rule and fled the country.

The British appointed Purandar, the son of Brajanath Gohain to rule the country in 1832 but then overthrew him in 1838. From then on, the entire country was under British rule.

The Khamtis

As we have already talked about the Ahoms, we should also

mention another branch of the Thai race which are called the Khamtis. These people originally lived in the upper Shan States but were driven out by expansion of the Burmese under Alaungphaya in the middle of the eighteenth century to follow their brothers into Assam. They also belonged to the ancient Shan Kingdom of Pong which bordered Tipperah, Yunan and Thailand and was called Mogaung by the Burmese and Mongmarong by the Shans. In the chronicles, Muangrimuangram was its capital. The Khamtis are Buddhists who had their own King or Rajah. There are various Thai races around Sadiya and the upper Dihing River in the north of Assam such as the Phakis or Phakials and the Kamjangs, but the most numerous of these were the Khamtis. This means "Place of Gold". Burmese characters were adopted for use in their writing where monks and teachers in temples made full use of it. There are up until now, no traces of Khamti literature, but there is a legend which talks about a big golden tree upon which a large heavy bird used to perch on while out hunting for children. Since no other tree could support the weight of this bird except this tree, the villagers decided to chop it down. With nowhere to rest, the desperate bird perched itself on a huge rock at the mouth of the Sada stream where it was killed by four slaves with arrows. Meanwhile, the tree of gold had disappeared straight after it had been felled. A small lake had formed around it.

The Thais of southern China

The Thai tribe in the south of China, according to Samuel R. Clarke of the China Inland Mission, is scattered about in Yunnan,

Kweichow, Kwangsi and Kwangtung. The Chinese call them the Chung-Chia tribes, but they are also known by other names. In Chinese records for example, they were also called Pay-Is and some at Kweiyang were called Bu Yuei. Mr. Edgar Betts had travelled across the country from Tushen to Singyifu, a journey which took seven days and nearly two hundred miles, through a region occupied entirely by the Chung-Chia and recorded that the inhabitants of Tushan city were mostly Chung-Chia or Shui-chia. These people spoke a dialect which resembled that of the Shans and the Siamese. In Anshunfu, the Chung-Chia were divided into two kinds, the Pulatsi who dwelled in the plains and the Pulung-tsi. It was confirmed by travellers and missionaries that these people had many songs of courtship which young men and women sang to each other, similar to the "Lamtad" of the Thais.

Gabrielle M. Vassal, for example, said that among the numerous tribes inhabiting Yunnan, there were the Pay-I, the Ton-La and the Pou-Yen who were all considered as part of the Thai race. These people were found mostly in the west from Talifu bordering Assam. During his travels, Dr. A.F. Legendre found them at Miao-Men and Long-Kai, far away from the Chinese up in the hills. There were only Pay-Is living in the small villages here.

From the information collected from various books, there is no doubt that the Payis or Chung-Chia originated from Nanchao, now a part of southern China. According to evidence found on a stone inscription made in the region of Kolofong in 766 discovered in 1805 at Tai-Ho Tch'eng, 15 li south of Talifu, they had their own literature and their own writing before they adopted the Chinese

style of writing as well as its scripture. Unfortunately, Kolofong's inscription was made in the Chinese characters. The stone had been left lying in a paddyfield for a long time and had been damaged considerably from having been used as a knife honer. Out of the original 3800 words, only 800 were decipherable. However, it did give an insight into the history and conditions of Nanchao during those days. According to research done by Professor F.W.K. Muller, "Vocabularien der Pa-Yi and Pah-Poh-Sprachen," he showed that even the Payis today still speak the Thai language and gave examples of some of their vocabularies.

ying	= Woman	tau	= turtle
chak	= to be separated	ngu	= snake
na	= field	mot	= ant
nong	= pond	la	= ass
luk tai	= Payi	nu	= rat
doy	= hill	mi	= bear
kang wan	= day	ru	= know
un	= warm	ok	= go out
nau	= cold	khin	= go up
kham	= evening	rak	= love
fa mut	= darkness	non	= lie down
ya	= grass	nang	= sit
nam tau	= gourd	siw	= buy
nok yung	= peacock	tim	= full
nok	= bird	mak	= much
kai	= cock	mi mak	= rich

thuk kan	= agree	yung	= mosquito
pau phai	= blow fire	phung	= bee
fan	= dream	lin	= monkey
chai	= man	kwang	= stag
fang nam	= bank	ngin	= hear
nam	= water	tham	= ask
Mung Ché	= Yunnan	khau	= go in
(compare : Nong Seh)		hai	= cry
kang khin	= night	chang	= hate
yin	= cold	luk	= get up
chau	= morning	pai	= go
pee	= year	khai	= sell
mai	= wood	kwang	= board
khin	= ginger	tae	= true
feen	= firewood	tai	= die
han	= swan	nee	= flee
pet	= duck	ing	= lean
pla	= fish	and so the list goes on.....	
pu	= crab		

“au” in German is pronounced like “ou” in “about”. These are clearly Thai words.

Other Thai tribes

According to Freeman, on the other side of the Red River towards the Sikiang at Lang Son, Dong-Dang, Bao-Sa, Cao-Bang, there lived the Thos and the Mawngs whose speech differed widely

from the Thais up in the north but their tone and pronunciation were close to that of the Lius'. Their vocabulary does not differ greatly from the Laos, with only slight differences in tone and pronunciation.

Near Lungchow in Kwangsi, there lived the Thos or Thai-los or the Nawngs and the Lawngs. There were sometimes traces of Cantonese and Mandarin in their vocabulary but otherwise it was the same as that of the Thos'.

In Nanning (south of Kwangsi), there were the Chawngs who were basically Thais and were also generally the same as the Tho. They occupied a very large area across the north of Kwangsi from Kweilin and Pinglo to Szecheng.

Mr Freeman also found the aborigines of Hainan called the Li-mu or the Loi who had many words similar to the Thai language. Some of these people were also found in the adjoining peninsula of Luichow in Kwangtung.

Colonel E. Diguet told us in "Les Montagnards du Tonkin" (Challamel 1908) that among the Thai groups in the Tongking area, there were the Nungs who lived on the frontier of China (from Lang-Son to Lao Cai); the Black Thais lived in the valleys of the Black River, the Red River and the Song Ma; the White Thais lived in the Lao Cai Circle and on the Upper Black River around Lai Chau. R. Robert added that there are Red Thais in the valley of the Nam-Ma and all along its right tributaries: Nam Xim, Nam Tuong, Nam Mo, etc. and also along the Nam Xam on the left. While the Black Thais, the White Thais and the Thos live in the valleys, the Nungs lived on higher land. There were also the Nhang, the Tho

Lao, the Tchoung Kia (Chung-Chia), the Lius, the Kouei chou, the Thai Muei, the Chao Lao, the Phuens (or Poueunes), the Thai Nuas, the Pu Thais and the Xan Lao living in this region. The Pu Thais could be found in great numbers at Huapanh thang Ha thang Hoc. The Thos and the Nungs adopted the Chinese alphabet.

Further away we had the Muongs who lived in Chobo towards the lower part of the Black River and since their language was more influenced by the Vietnamese, there were very little traces of Thai in it.

The Nhang live at Luc Khu in the circle of Cao Bang and were very similar to the Nung. They use the Chinese-Vietnamese characters with a Chinese pronunciation.

The Proper Thai Literature

[illegible]

(Thai inscription stone of A.D. 1292 made by King Rama
Kamhaeng of Sukothai)

The Sukothai Period

Thai literature of the southern group started in the Sukothai period when King Ramkamhaeng invented Thai alphabets in 1283 and made a stone inscription in 1292. This was the first example of the Thai alphabet and did much to preserve the history of Sukothai for us. It is now kept in the National Museum of Bangkok. The first piece of Thai literature was written in very simple and straightforward style, telling of the conditions of the kingdom during those prosperous times when everyone was free, under the rule of the just and liberal King Ramkamhaeng who encouraged free trade and most importantly, who loved his people. His country extended as far as Lanchang in the north, the Bay of Bengal in the west and the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula in the south. He also told us about his ancestors, his father, his mother and his brothers and how he used to help his father fight the war against the governor of Muong Chot. The best translation of this stone inscription was completed by Prince Wan Waithayakorn in the Siam Society Journal of 1965. Here are excerpts taken from it:

“My father’s name is Sri Indraditya, my mother’s name is Nang Suang and my elder brother’s name is Ban Muong. There were altogether five of us, three boys and two girls that were born of the same mother. My elder brother died while I was still young. When I was nineteen, Khun Sam Chon, Chief of Muong Chot had battled with Muong Tak. While my father’s soldiers abandoned him in fear, I chose to fight alongside him, seizing Khun Sam Chon’s elephant and drove him out of our land.

“During the life of King Ramkamhaeng, this Muong

Sukothai had been very prosperous, for there were fish in the water and rice in the fields. Whoever wanted to trade in either elephants, horses, silver or gold did as they so pleased. If commoners, nobles or royals disagreed on something, the King would be the one to investigate on the matter and decide who is in the right and who is in the wrong without being biased.

“A bell is hung up for the general public to ring when they have complaints or need advice from the King. When King Ramkamhaeng hears this, he will question the person and try and sort out his problem. Coconut groves, jackfruit and mango groves abounded the city in those days. In the middle of this Muong Sukothai, there was also a clear potable spring. Around Muong Sukothai, there was a triple rampart that was three thousand four hundred wa's in area. The people in Muong Sukothai are charitable, pious and devoted to giving alms for their main religion was Buddhism. They all observe the precepts of Buddhist Lent at the end of which Kathin offerings normally take place for an entire month. Previously, Thai scripture had not existed, until one day, in 1205, during the year of the Goat, King Ramkamhaeng decided to set his heart to it and established the Thai scripture. He thought to himself that on the east as far as Sra Luang, Song Kwae, Lumbachai, Sakha up to the bank of Mekong, to Vientaine and Viengkham, to as far as Konthi on the south, Phra Bang, Phraek, Suvarnabhumi, Rajaburi, Sridhamaraj to the coast on the west as far as Muong Chot, Muong...Hongsawadi to the seas, on the north as far as Muong Prae, Muong Man, Muong...Muong Phlua, beyond the banks of Mekong to Muong Chawa.”

King Ramkamhaeng of Sukothai had a very intelligent consort named Nang Nopamas or Thai Sri Chulalak who was the daughter of the court Brahmin. It was from her astrologer father that she learned a great many skills as well as traditions and customs of her culture. She was the greatest poet of her time and produced work such as Thao Sri-Chulalak's Textbook which described in detail, various ceremonies of the time, including the history of Loy Kratong.

The Maxims of Phra Ruang

Maxims by Phra Ruang or Rama Kamhaeng were believed to have been found inscribed on stone slabs in Wat Poh. With these inscriptions, he tried to teach his people to be good. The stones had sayings such as : love yourself more than you love your money. Lose money but don't lose your honour. Always keep friendship and always give to charity. Do not go against strong currents with your canoe. Do not stay for too long when visiting other people's homes. Do not show disrespect to your superiors. Do not travel into deserted places on your own. Do not boast of your riches. Remember the things that your elders teach you. Do not ask what is dear to your friend. Do not crave for expensive food all the time. Do not be angry when teachers scold you. Do not go into the forest and forget your knife.

There were of course other stone inscriptions made by other Kings of Sukothai that were similar to the ones made by King Litai found at Wat Pamamuang.

Another piece of literature from the Sukothai period which

still remains is the treatise on cosmology called *Trai Pumi Katha*, written by King Luta (1347-1374). The book describes Earth, Heaven and Hell, the spirits that inhabit Hell, how they suffer and why.

The Ayudhya Period (1350-1767)

Books written during the Ayudhya period became more numerous as Ayudhya became a prosperous city full of people. According to accounts given by its foreign visitors, it was as big as London and Paris but, unfortunately, Ayudhya was sacked by Burmese invaders several times and was destroyed in 1767. Most of the city was lost in the conflagration. However, as education was not equally distributed during those days, it was passed on more or less among the upper class people who had more reason to learn in order to serve the King. Thus it was only among the nobles, the princes and Kings that literature flourished. Since writing required one to be expressive in an artistic way, the poetic form was always used. The various poetic forms were known under different names depending on the number of words in each line, how they rhymed and how much it sounded like music. *Lilit*, *Chanta*, *Kavya*, *Klon*... Since literature was encouraged by the Kings in their courts, it was forgotten during war but flourished once again when peace resumed. As there were no schools in those days, learning took place in the temples where monks were teachers. It is for this reason that religious topics were inevitably woven into the lessons as well which were what monks used as reference for writing their books.

The Early Period of Ayudhya, up to the reign of King Boromatrai Lokanart (1350-1488)

This early period was characterised by four important pieces of work, the oath to the King, the defeat of Chiengmai (Youn Pai), the story of Phra Law and the story of Maha Jataka.

The Oath of the King was the oldest piece of work which remained in use up to the Ratanakosindra (Bangkok) period and was abolished in 1932. When King Uthong founded the capital of Ayudhya in 1350, he had his nobles swear an oath written by the Brahmins in order to strengthen his position as King. It described how his power (divine right) was derived, why a country must have a leader and why the nobles must be faithful to their King. It then spoke of how those who are loyal to him will find happiness and become prosperous in their lives while those who are unfaithful will face with misfortune, unhappiness and death. The nobles would then drink holy water, which spears and swords have already been dipped into by the Brahmins, bringing ill-luck to those who do not keep the words sworn to them before the King.

The Defeat of Chiengmai. Chiengmai was at the time, the capital of a northern Thai State of Lanathai, a country which had always been contesting for power with its southern sister State, Ayudhya. The causes of the wars with Chiengmai during the reign of King Boroma Trailokanart was over Sukothai. Because the descendants of the Kings of Sukhothai still grieved over the loss of their country to Ayudhya, they went over to Chiengmai to ask for

assistance. There were altogether four wars which King Boroma Trailokanart waged with Chiengmai. The one in 1474 gained him Chiengyun. A book to praise the King for this victory had been written.

King Boroma Trailokanart was also an efficient administrator, a law giver and a religious man. He strengthened his country and centralised the system of control over his country by organising various government departments into Vieng-Vang, Klang and Na and reorganised the military department by designating the famous Palace Law (Kot Montien Ban). Though disorderly, the Palace Law strengthened his power.

Maha Jataka. These are stories about the previous lives of The Lord Buddha. According to Buddhist religion, he had lived many lives before he was at last born as The Lord Buddha because Buddhists believed in the transmigration of the souls and in reincarnation. Each of his many previous lives were so full of merit gained through his good deeds through self-sacrifice that he came closer to perfection in each life until he was finally reborn as The Lord. In his previous life, he was also born as a prince called Vessantara who sacrificed and gave so much to the needy and the poor. These stories about him were called the “Great Life” or the Maha Jataka in the sacred Pali language. Since it was thought that one would gain great merit by listening to the tale of his great life, the King had the stories written out on paper in 1482 so that they could be retold by those who were interested to know about them. These stories were originally read during the ceremony of the be-

ginning of Buddhist Lent and were rewritten in Kavya form during King Songtam's reign (1610-1628) so that they could be used in sermons to laypersons.

The story of Phra Lor

This is the story of a northern prince who fell in love with the two daughters of an enemy country, similar to the doomed love story of Romeo and Juliet. Both the prince and his two lady lovers died in the end from the hands of the two princesses' grandmother, who had sent an army to kill them upon the knowledge that Phra Lor was in her granddaughters' palace. The reason for her hatred of Phra Lor was that she still bore a grudge against his father who had attacked her country in the past and killed her husband. The father of the two princesses, however, had wanted to reconcile but arrived too late to save the lives of the three lovers. The common grief shared by the two sister states brought them closer together and they finally became friends.

No one is certain as to who wrote this and when it was written. It had sometimes been ascribed to an author from Chiangmai since it was more a story about a northern prince. It was the first romance to have been written in verse and according to old superstitions and beliefs, Phra Lor had been attracted to the two princesses because of a forest hermit who had sent a magic cock to lead Phra Lor to the country of the two princesses.

The flower period of Thai literature

Literature flourished during the period of King Narai's reign

(1656-1688) because the King, who was a great poet himself, had encouraged poetry. His country was peaceful and prospered because he opened it to foreign trade and made good relations with foreign merchants. He sent embassies to foreign courts who brought back knowledge and new ideas into the country, welcomed foreign ambassadors, missionaries and traders. One of his courtiers, Phya Horatibodi, had written the first Thai primer called Chindamani, which was a standard text used by children until the beginning of the Bangkok period. His court was honoured with the greatest of Thai poets, one of them being Sri-Prat, the son of the author of the textbook mentioned earlier.

The court of King Narai was so crowded by poets of great renown that they conversed with each other in poetry. Even the King's wives were poets. The guardian of the palace gate also talked in poetry as well others such as the King's teacher Phra Maharajkru, the Prince of Chiangmai, Phra Si-Mahosot, Khun Tepkawi, Khun Phrom Montri, Khun Si-Kawiraj, Khun Sara Prasert and a few ladies of the court.

King Narai himself wrote four pieces of work.

1. Samutakote 2. Palee teaching his brother 3. Tosarot teaching Rama 4. Teaching his nobles (Raj-Sawat).

Samutakote. This first began as a long story in poetic style by Phra Maha Rajkru for the King's 25th birthday but was not completed when he died. King Narai continued to work on it but also left it unfinished. It was finally completed during the second reign

of the Bangkok Dynasty, the time of Prince Paramanujit-Jinorot, by the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand. The version we have today is therefore one which had been completed by three different people.

Prince Samutakote was the son of King Pintutat who had studied the art of archery and was excelled by no one in this sport. While out hunting for elephants in the forest one day, he had fallen asleep. A God carried him up to the palace of Princess Pintumdee to sleep with her and brought him back down to Earth early the next morning. Upon waking up and not finding Prince Samutakote sleeping beside her, Princess Pintumdee made a sketch of him and used it to make enquiries to the villagers about his identity and of his whereabouts. She finally found out that his name was Samutakote and sent a lady by the name of Vittayataree to go and find him. When the prince arrived, a contest was held to test the skills of the men. Because the prince was able to lift a heavy iron bow and shoot arrows with it while the other men were not, he was given the hands of Princess Pintumdee as a reward. The other princes, however, were jealous and picked up a fight with him but failed to overpower him, so he finally got to marry the princess in peace. While out strolling in the garden one day, two Vithayathorns (god singers) were fighting with each other in mid-air when one of them was injured and fell.

The three other pieces, taken from the Ramayana epic, were meant to be didactic poems intended to teach his subordinates how to behave, just like Palee and Sukreep had done. Palee, before dying, told his brother to be faithful to Rama, his overlord, and taught him how to behave.

Phra Maha Rajkru: The full-length story in poetic style which the Maha Rajkru had written was the story of the tiger and the cow (Suako). The story is very much like Kakanam in Laotian literature but with certain variations.

In the forest, there lived a tiger and her cub as well as a cow and her calf. One day while the mother tiger was away, her cub had been hungry and was offered milk from the mother cow. When the cub's mother returned, he asked his mother to accept the cow and her calf under her protection and invite them to live together in the same cave. One day the tiger decided to eat the cow which enraged both the young cub and calf so much that they killed the tiger. The two friends then went out and met a hermit who turned them into human beings. The young tiger became the elder brother called Holvichai while the younger brother was called Kawi. The hermit then taught them some magic and gave them a magic sword which their souls were to embody. The hermit told them that if either of them should find the sword rusty, it meant that the other was in danger and must hurry to his help. Kawi and Holvichai had arrived at an empty town and found that a giant had come to eat up all of its inhabitants, so they brought them all back to life. The King of that country then gave his daughter to Holvichai. Kawi then went on to another empty town where he found a drum which he later discovered had a girl called Nang Chandra hiding in it. She told him that an eagle had eaten up all the inhabitants of her town but she was the only one who survived because her relatives had hidden her inside this drum. Making a fire to attract the eagle, Kawi killed it and married Princess Chandra Suda. One day while Princess Chandra

was bathing in the river, a few strands of her scented hair drifted down the river and was retrieved by the King of a neighbouring country, King Yosabhumī. He at once sent an old woman attendant to find out who the hair belonged to. The old woman came to Kawi's court, disguising herself as a servant and tried to find out some secrets about the princess. In the end, she put Kawi's magic sword into the fire and killed him since his soul resided there. She then took the princess who was unconscious, to King Yosabhumī, but the princess refused to welcome any of his advances.

In the meantime, Holvichai had noticed rust on his sword and quickly went to find Kawi. He pulled the sword from the fire and revived Kawi, then disguised himself as a holy hermit who had the power to rejuvenate an old man in a fire ceremony. Holvichai's fame was heard throughout the land that he was one day invited to the court of Yosabhumī, who hoped to become young once again so as to be more of a match for the princess. He allowed Holvichai to start a fire in order to rejuvenate him but Holvichai burnt him in the fire and killed him instead. Kawi was at last reunited with Chandra Suda and ruled the country happily with her.

Sriprat

He was the greatest poet of all time who breathed out poems without even having to pause to think before coming up with a perfect poem. But like all poets, he could not avoid praising and courting beautiful ladies, which lead to his own downfall and death. It must be remembered that, in those days, the King and provincial governors were absolute and could order execution with-

out trial. Sriprat had shown his talents as a poet at the very tender age of nine. One day the King wrote two lines of a poem praising a lady but had only four lines left to finish. Unable to do so, he asked Phra Horatibodi to finish it for him. When Phra Horatibodi could not yet think of what to write, he fell asleep. When he woke up, he found the poem had already been completed and it sounded just perfect. He later discovered that it was his son who had written the two lines for him while he was asleep. He was, however, upset because according to court etiquette, nobody was allowed to touch the King's work without royal permission. If his son was able to take such liberty, he would one day offend the King and surely be put to death as he had disobeyed palace etiquette. However, he presented the completed poem to the King who liked it a lot and upon knowing that it was the work of Phra Horatibodi's son, asked the boy to be introduced to him. The boy was at once made his royal page. Before agreeing, the father had begged with the King that should his son offend him in any way, he will be banished rather than executed. The King granted this request.

Here is a literal translation of the famous four lines

- Who dared touch the lady's cheeks that they have now lost complexion?
- Was it a mosquito, a gnat, a fly or a midge that took such liberty?
- When not even humans dare to commit such an act.
- Who then dared whiten the lovely lady's complexion?

The King was very pleased with Sriprat's poetic wit and made him his favourite servant because while nobody dared to an-

swer some of his questions which sometimes had embarrassing answers, Sriprat would do so without the slightest hesitation and in a way which greatly pleased him.

One day when the King went out into the forest, he saw a couple of monkeys making a lot of noise while making love. He turned to ask his courtiers what they were doing but nobody dared answer him. The King then asked Sriprat the same question who at once replied, "Sire, it is not suitable to inform you about their actions since they are monkeys and you are a King." The King then asked again, "But what are they doing?" "It really is not for Your Majesty to know about, Sire, but they are making love in extraordinary ways." The King liked the answers and told him that he was to be given the title of Sriprat the Sage from that moment on.

Upon his return, Sriprat met the prince of Chiangmai who was adept at talking in poetry. The Prince asked Sriprat about his new title.

Prince - My dear sir, when did the King grant you this title?

Sriprat - He granted it to me when he went into the forest.

Prince - Why did he decide to give such a title to such a scary-looking man?

Sriprat - The man is dark only in complexion. Inside, he is made of gold.

Of course when the questions and answers were thrown back and forth in poetry, the musical rhythm and wit very much pleased the listeners of this conversation.

One day the King was so pleased with Sriprat's reply that he gave him a ring. Upon leaving the palace gate, the gatekeeper,

who was also a poet asked him,

“Where did you get this ring from?”

Sriprat - “The mighty owner of the Earth gave it to me.”

Gatekeeper - “What did you do to make him do that?”

Sriprat - “I wrote him a poem and he gave this to me as a reward”. Once during the contest graciously presided over by the King, Sriprat had a competition with the Prince of Chiangmai where the prince opened with the first four lines:

“Bang, bang, it was not the peal of thunder - she moaned.

Whiz, whiz, it was not the sound of the wind blowing, I cried

Top, top it was not the sound of the rain - I sighed

Hot, it was not the heat of fire - it was the heat of my love.”

Sriprat then said, “She cried until the tears flooded the highest of Heavens and drowned all the animals until Olympus crumbled.”

At this point the King observed, “If even the highest of hills tumbled, how did you survive?”

Sriprat then said, “If Brahma had not come to my help, I would not be living right now.”

But Sriprat never knew when to stop and he would allow his wit and acerbic comments to get the better of him. He met the same old lady again at a Loy Krathong ceremony where the King had asked his courtiers to make up poems in praise of the floats. Sriprat made a witty comment on them as well as to the lady-in-waiting, “The float is beautiful, but had the lady who floated it been younger, I would have asked for her hand in marriage by now.” This greatly

incensed the old lady who at once said in a poetic style (for she too was a poet,) "Tut, tut, the rabbit gapes ambitiously at the moon little realising the unsuitability of his low background". Sriprat was not insulted and said, "Although the rabbit was admiring the moon that indeed was beyond his reach, both of us who are on Earth during the rutting season, can enjoy ourselves."

The lady could not contain her anger any longer and reported this to the King. As punishment, Sriprat was sent to a ditch to empty out mud. As the lady walked past, he pretended to throw mud at her by accident. This time, for injuring the lady of the court, although according to Palace Law the punishment was execution, Sriprat was banished to Nakorn Sritammarat.

His poetic wits again made him a favourite of the local governor there, but as he did not know when to stop, he again made poetical courtship to the governor's ladies. The governor, being a very jealous husband, thought that Sriprat had already made love to his wives and at once ordered him to be executed on the beach in front of the governor's residence. Before dying, he wrote another poem on the sand with his foot.

"I call the Earth to act as a witness for I too am a man with a teacher. He ordered my execution though I have committed no wrong. If I was not wrong, may this sword pay him back".

With those words, he died. The King soon missed him and asked for his return but found out that the governor had put his official poet to death without his permission. Angry, he ordered the execution of the governor, making Sriprat's last wish come true.

Sriprat had written two poetical works before his death. The

story of Anurudh and the woes of Sriprat, the latter being the description of his journey to Nakorn Sritammarat giving the details of various things he had seen and felt, starting with the city of Ayudhya, religion and his love for a lady.

The story of Anirudh was very much like that of Samutakote's. Prince Anirudh went hunting for elephants in the forest when he fell asleep and a god had carried him up to sleep with Princess Usa, a giant's step-daughter who was the King of Pan. When dawn neared, the God had brought Anirudh back to his place in the forest. Waking up and not finding Anirudh beside her, the princess sent her lady-in-waiting who was a fairy to look for him and to bring him back. The giant King of Pan was very angry that Anirudh was no longer keeping his daughter company and sent an army to capture him. He was soon caught and tied up. But Narai, his uncle, rescued him from the giant. Anirudh finally defeated the giant and forced him to become his gatekeeper, while he ruled happily ever after as King with his lover in the Kingdom of Pan.

The late Ayudhya Period

After the death of King Narai in 1688, the country plunged back into insecure conditions, made unrestful at times by various contesters to the throne of Ayudhya. First, Petraja usurped the throne and tried to suppress a series of disturbances. Then his lascivious adopted son, Phra Chao Sua, lived a life full of dissipation and in a constant state of drunkenness. His successor, King Taisra battled with the Cambodians. After this, civil war took place between the King's brother and the son, because the King had tried to change

the order of succession by appointing his son, Prince Abhai, as heir to the throne instead of his brother, Boromakote, who was already viceroy or second King. Prince Abhai's army ended up being defeated and Boromakote became King in 1733. It was under King Boromakote that the country became relatively calm again and since the King was a poet himself, literature thrived again in court. The most famous poet of the time was his eldest son, Prince Dharmadhibet Senapitak. Princess Kuntun and Princess Mongkut also wrote famous masterpieces such as the story of Inao in verse, called Inao Yai and Inao Lek respectively. Drama also developed during these times and several masterpieces were produced such as Manee-Pichai, Sangsilpachai, Sangthong or the Golden Conch Prince, Suvarnahongse, Kraithong, Manohra, Rathasen, Kobutra and Chaiyachet.

King Boromakote. The moving of the image of the sleeping Buddha near the riverbank which was subsiding further inland was an occasion for the King to write about the safe moving of the image. It had been written while he was still the viceroy.

Story has it that the abbot of Wat Pamoke Temple had reported to the King that strong river currents had begun to cause the riverbank to erode so much that the statue will collapse into the river within a year. When the King consulted his ministers about this, there was a mixture in opinion. While Phya Rajsonggram said that the statue ought to be moved away inland, the viceroy disagreed, saying that there were risks involved in moving such a large statue. It was better to destroy it and use the bricks to rebuild an-

other one. Phya Rajsonggram still insisted that he would be able to move it without breaking it. The King then called a council of monks together and asked for their advice on whether it would be right of them to destroy the statue, to which the monks replied that since there was nothing wrong with the statue, it would be a great sin to break it intentionally. The King then allowed Phya Rajsonggram to move it who then summoned his men to dig holes into its base and put logs through it. He also put logs lengthwise through its base to make a sort of wheelbarrow and then took the bricks between the holes off where the logs were already placed firmly through the base. With this method, the statue was given a new base made of logs and could therefore be dragged towards its new location where it now stands. Anyone who visits Ayudhya today can go and see it. It took Phya Rajsonggram five months to complete his mission.

Prince Senapitak or Dharmadhibet. Prince Senapitak was the eldest son of the King and Queen and was appointed Crown Prince in 1740. He was the most gifted of all poets and was famous for his journal on his journey by boat. This collection of poems was more of a diary of the poet's travels and stressed on the beauty of nature where he expressed his appreciation of it with the fiery passion brought about by his separation from his lover whom he had left behind. The prince wrote it so well that it sounded highly pleasant to anyone who heard it. The three famous songs were the boat song *Heh-Rua*, the *Travel to Tarn Tongdaeng* and the *Nirat Phrabat*. This is an example of what he said in his boat song.

“Looking at fish swimming together in pairs, I think of you

and feel sad. Even fish know how to love, so it serves me right for having left her behind. Looking at the bright and beautiful “Moonlight” fish only reminds me of how much more beautiful you are. There is nothing more beautiful and rewarding for me than to see you turn your chin away from a man.

“As I look at the beautiful golden carp, I am reminded how much more beautiful my lady is with her bright shawls. Similar to the “flying fish” that fly away from men, my beloved runs away from my love.

“Who was it that bruised their cheeks? Your cheeks, however, were bruised because they have always been admired by all. The fish look so truly sad, just like me who have been separated from my lady love.”

Prince Senapitak was in love with Princess Sangwal but his father made her his own wife instead. Despite this, the prince never stopped loving her and went to see her in her room one night, where they both swore eternal love for each other. When the King found out about this, he ordered his men to punish his son by giving him 230 whippings. Sadly, only after 180 whippings, Prince Senapitak died from the pain. Before dying he dipped his finger in his own blood and wrote a poem which called upon the Earth to witness his genuine love for his lady.

“May I offer my blood as a testimony of my love in this letter.”

This blood is a declaration of two hearts which longed to be together. These two hearts died for love. The love we have for each other can never be changed by anyone nor will it lessen. The world

should know that our love is greater than the love felt by any other couple and that they should take us as an example of true love. Love each other the way we do and never throw it away.

Men should be truthful to women while women should be forever faithful to her man.

The poet prince died in 1756 at the age of 40 and Princess Sangwal also died after having been whipped.

Birth of the Drama

Many plays were produced during this time and they were acted both inside and outside the palace. There were 3 which were acted inside the palace namely, Ramayana, Unarudha and Inao. The royal troupe was of course much more refined and artistic and used only actresses, but the more popular ones outside the palace known as Lakhon Nok (as opposed to the Lakhon Nai of the palace) used only men and were therefore much cruder. They were meant as entertainment for the general public and the three dramas reserved for the royal troupe only were not allowed to be performed.

There are two dramas which have been written by two royals, one called Dalang or the Big Inao, written by Princess Kuntun and the Small Inao which was written by Princess Mongkut. The latter is the version which is recognised by all and is the most famous piece in Thai literature.

Inao: The heroine of the play, Busba, figures as one of the most beautiful women ever to have existed in literature. She was ignored by the hero who had never met her since their marriage had been arranged by the parents of both sides. Offended by the

hero's ignorance of his daughter, her father gave her away to an ugly prince who had asked for her hands. Meeting her by chance one day since he had to represent his father at the heroine's court, the hero realised that he had been ignoring one of the most beautiful women on Earth all this time. But since it was already too late to have her back, his only choice was to kill her fiancé and abduct her. The play was written in verse form and there is nothing more pleasant than to hear it read out loud. It had been so beautifully written that it is by far one of the most charming pieces of literature and is one of the most read stories.

Popular form of the Drama : If the Royal troupe was organised to entertain His Majesty the King in his court, the popular drama (Lakhon Nok) is entertainment aimed for the public. It also has a religious significance because it is performed in the public as an act of showing gratitude for the spirits who had helped those to recover from serious illnesses. The Lakhon Nok originally excluded women performers but today, these restrictions no longer exist and both men and women all perform in them.

Among the plays acted during this period were Manee Pichai, Sangsilpachai, Sangthong, Suvarnahong, Kraithong, Manohra, Rathasen, Kobutra and Chaiyachet.

Manee Pichai : One day, Prince Manee Pichai was walking in a forest when he found a beautiful lady named Miss Yor Phra Klin living in a bamboo, and so brought her back with him. The Queen, his mother, did not like her and tried to convince her

son to marry the Princess of China instead, accusing Miss Yor Phra Klin of being a devil who eats cats. She was thus banished into the forest where she was saved by Indra, the God of Heaven, who taught her how to cure poisonous snake bites. When the Queen Mother one day got bitten by a snake and became unconscious, Yor Phra Klin disguised herself as a Brahmin lady and saved her. Yor Phra Klin then took Manee Pichai to the forest and when he came home, was taken to China but Yor Phra Klin followed him and brought him back. On the way, a giant had kidnapped the prince and tried to make him marry her daughter. When Yor Phra Klin found out, she was extremely jealous to find the Prince with the giant's daughter. Manee Pichai then discovered that Yor Phra Klin was really his wife.

Sangsilpachai : This story is so similar to the story of Sinxay of Laos that it may be possible that parts of it had been taken from the Laotian version, since Laos claimed that it was Prince Pangkham who had written it. Silpachai, son of King Senakut and Queen Patuma, was banished from the city because his other six wives were jealous of him. Silpachai went to save his aunt, Kesorn Sumonta, who had been abducted by a giant and, while making his way back to his capital with his aunt, the other six sons pushed him into a ravine and brought the aunt back to the capital themselves. When granted audience to the King, they claimed to have been the one to save their aunt. Meanwhile, Indra, the God of Heaven, had saved Silpachai from the ravine and had built a city for him to live in. At last King Senakut and Queen Patuma met with Silpachai,

found out the truth about his misfortune and in turn punished the six sons by making them serve Silpachai.

Sangthong : Sangthong, or the Prince of the Golden Conch, is perhaps the better known of Thai plays simply because Rama II rewrote it. It is considered one of the masterpieces in Thai literature and children also study it in schools.

Sangthong was the son of King Yosavimal and Queen Chantra. Unfortunately Queen Chantra gave birth to a son who lived in a conch. Since this was considered to be a bad omen for both the mother and son, they were banished from court and sent to live with an old couple in a small garden hut. One day, when he was helping his mother catch a hen, his mother accidentally broke the conch, exposing the boy to the world where he nearly drowned. Luckily, he was saved by an underwater serpent called Naga and was sent to live with a female giant, Nang Panturat, who adopted him and loved him dearly. When Sangthong grew up, he one day discovered that his foster mother was a giant and ran away from her, after having dipped himself in a well filled with golden dye. He took the magic wand and jacket that carried him through the air where he was pursued by his mother up to the riverbank. She passed away from a broken heart, leaving him a magical chant written on the sand that called upon all the fish and wild creatures of the forest together when read aloud. Sangthong disguised himself as an ugly barbarian and went to live with the gardener of King Thao Samonta. The King had seven beautiful daughters and the youngest, Rojana, was the fairest of them all. While the King managed

to marry off his daughters to various princes without any problems, his youngest daughter refused to marry anyone. When he finally lost his patience with her, he called upon the “ugly” Sangthong and forced her to marry him. But the Gods ensured that Rojana was able to see through his abominable looks and made her give her hands willingly in marriage. She was made to go and live with him in a hut at the bottom of the King’s garden. The King was so disgusted by his son-in-law that he tried to get rid of him by setting up tasks for his sons-in-law. Those who fail any of the tasks would be punished through execution. The first task was for them to catch as many fish as possible. With the magic chant left to Sangthong by his mother before she died, he sat under a big tree near the river and managed to catch the most out of all the others. The six other in-laws, on the other hand, had so much difficulty in doing so that they begged Sangthong for some fish. Sangthong agreed to give them some if they paid him back with chunks of skin from their nose. The King, upon being handed the fish by Sangthong, was unable to punish him, was forced to set up another task. This time, anyone who brought back as many deer as possible would win while those who catch the least will be executed. Again, Sangthong was able to summon all the deer in the forest and again, the six other sons-in-law had to come and beg Sangthong for the animals. This time, Sangthong demanded their ears. The King still could not punish Sangthong. Indra, God of Heaven decided to help Sangthong once and for all by disguising himself and approaching the King with a group of men. He challenged King Thao Samonta to a game of polo where the deal was that if the King lost, he were to give up

his kingdom. But of course being of no match for the God of Heaven, the six sons-in-law were easily beaten. Indra then called upon anybody else who wished to fight with him. The King then forced his men to go and beg Sangthong for his help. This time, Sangthong came as his true handsome self and pretended to play a game of polo with Indra. He was flying in the air and gave Indra such a hard time that he was driven back up to Heaven. It was a match hailed by all and there was rejoicing everywhere when Indra was defeated. The King was very pleased when he found out that Sangthong was really the young prince with magical powers and invited him back to the palace to live with his wife. King Yosvimol and Queen Chantra, who had come in search of their son, all rejoiced when Sangthong was welcomed back to his country.

Suvarnahongse: While out bathing in the river, Prince Suvarnahongse found a pot floating down the river which contained flowers and a letter written by a princess. Since the letter urged its founder to go and meet her at the city of Mattang, Suvarnahongse complied and climbed up a kite line to the top of the palace where the princess was. After having slept beside her, he climbed back down the kite line but was struck by a lance that had been set to trap him. Wounded, he returned to his city where he later died of his wounds. Princess Ketsuriyong, his wife, went in search of him and on the way met Indra, the God of Heaven, who gave her a magic arrow and magic water. With these she continued on her journey and found a giant with whom she fought with and killed. When she decided to bring him back to life, the giant swore to be

her loyal and lifelong servant. She went to the city of Ayarat, where she brought her husband back to life and then left. Prince Suvarnahongse however, went after her, fought with Suwarnavig her stepfather and killed him. Suvarnahongse and Ketsuriyong now returned to the city of Ayarat and met a giant called Virunmek who stole their flying horse on the way. The horse led the giant back to Mattang where he called for help and Suvarnahongse's giant servant came to the rescue, killing Virunmek. Survarnahongse and Ketsuriyong now went on foot to Ayarat but the princess was pushed into a river by a giant on the way. It disguised itself as the princess and followed Suvarnahongse. The flying horse and the giant-servant came to save Princess Ketsuriyong in Ayarat, where the giant tried to escape but was eventually captured and killed.

Kraithong: Crocodiles living in caves in the underwater world were able to disguise themselves as human beings, which was why they also had human wives. Such was the case with Chalawan, King of the crocodiles. One day, he abducted Tapaotong, daughter of a millionaire, and brought her back to his cave in the underwater world. In desperation, the rich man searched for someone brave enough to save his daughter when he came upon the famous tamer of crocodiles, Kraithong. Kraithong was told to call Chalawan up to land, where he fought with him and wounded him, making him retreat back to his cave. The unrelenting Kraithong followed him down to his lair and brought Tapaotong back to her father. The governor then ordered his men to kill Chalawan. When Kraithong went back to the cave, he met Chalawan's two wives,

Wimala and Luamlaiwan and married them before coming back to live with the two daughters of the rich man on land.

Manohra : Far away from Earth, there was a kingdom high up on the mountaintop that was inhabited by the Kinorns, or half human half birds. Patumraj, King of the Kinorns, had seven beautiful daughters, the youngest of whom was captured by a hunter while swimming in a pond at the foot of the hill. She was then presented to Prince Suton who married her but her mother-in-law loathed her and plotted against her. One day, she sent Suton off on a false mission, taking the advantage of his absence to order the execution of Nang Manohra. But the clever Manohra begged for one last wish before she was executed, and that was for her to have her wings back so that she could dance for her mother-in-law to see one last time. When she was given her wings, she quickly fled to her home up on the mountaintop. When Suton came back and realised that his wife was missing, he followed her to her home on the mountaintop, having had to overcome various obstacles before finally reaching her. To be certain, King Patunraj tested Suton's love for his daughter by presenting the fingers of his seven daughters through tiny holes and making him identify which one was his wife's. Suton was able to do this without any problems and was thus happily reunited with Manohra.

Rathasen: Rathasen was the son of King Rathasit. The King had twelve wives who were all put into prison where they were tortured, after he had married his last wife, Nang Santhee.

One day, all twelve of them were blinded. Rathasen, who helped his father fight against the princes who came to bet for the country in cock fights, roused the jealousy of Nang Santhee, a giant in disguise, besotted with Rathasit. Back in her country, she had a daughter named Nang Mery. In order to be rid of him, she sent Rathasen to Nang Mery, attaching a secret letter to her daughter telling her that he should be killed immediately. On the way, however, a hermit who had given shelter to Rathasen changed the contents of the letter, saying that she was to marry Rathasen instead. In Nang Mery's Kingdom, Rathasen found the eyes belonging to his twelve blind mothers and a magic lemon helped the blind to regain sight. Pretending to marry Nang Mery, he secretly took the eyes and the magic lemon and made his escape. When Mery followed him, he used the water and hills to obstruct her pathway so that she could not follow him. Realising that he did not love her, Mery soon died of a broken heart. Rathasen then proceeded on his journey to save his twelve mothers and gave them back their eyesight. Rathasen finally told his father that Santhee was a giant in disguise and she was finally executed.

Kobutra : Kobutra was the son of the God and Goddess of the Sun but he was brought up by a lioness. One day, Kobutra met Princess Maneesakorn and Prince Arunkumarn in the forest. They fled from the enemy who had overtaken their city. Kobutra helped them win back their kingdom and brought their parents back to life. He then went on with Arunkumarn to the city of Kalong where he met Princess Ampanmala and married her. Later his fa-

ther, the Sun God, built him a town so that Kobutra could live with his two Queens, Kesorn Maneesakorn and Ampanmala. The latter tried to monopolise Kobutra's love by concocting a magic potion and making him drink it but Arunkumarn found out about it. Disgraced, Ampanmala was exiled.

Chaiyachet : Chaiyachet was the son of the King of Hemanta and Queen Keosajja. One day Chaiyachet was out hunting when he was captured by a giant. He was saved by Princess Suwincha the stepdaughter of King Singhol and fell in love with her. He decided to stay on in her kingdom rendering his services to King Singhol. One day King Varunpak sent an embassy to ask for the hands of Princess Suwincha, but when King Singhol refused, his country was invaded by King Varunpak's troops. Chaiyachet helped King Singhol by fighting against Varunpak and eventually killing him. He was then given the hands of Princess Suwincha in marriage and went back to live in his country. The other seven wives were very jealous of her that they kidnapped her new-born baby and replaced it with a piece of wood. They then accused her of being a witch for having given birth to a piece of wood which resulted in her being banished. On her way, she met her son so they went back together to their hometown. Prince Chaiyachet, who had gone out in search for his wife, was fighting with an enemy whom he later discovered had been his son. They went into town together where they were accepted by everyone. Suwincha was once more married to Prince Chaiyachet.

Thus the Ayudhya period ended when Burmese troops swept across Ayudhya and burnt the entire city down in 1767. The plan had been so well executed that Ayudhya's last King died in front of his own gates, while the rest who were not able to escape were taken to Burma. Since Ayudhya could no longer be rebuilt, a liberation army under a new leader moved the capital to Dhonburi. From there, the capital was moved to the modern city of Bangkok. Everything had to be revived and rebuilt. The few books found in different parts of the country that survived Burmese destruction were collected and kept together. The Kings of Bangkok's new dynasty ordered the revival of the national literature including records of the turmoil and ruin caused by Burmese invasions. It was not until the Burmese fell under British rule that Siam was finally left in peace.

Literature during the Dhonburi and early Bangkok period

The war was still on during this period. The last King of Ayudhya was found dead at the gates to his own city, rendering Ayudhya to exist without King. When the Burmese army ultimately withdrew, Thailand was left in the hands of the government and its generals. The country was split up into six parts, each with a kinglet. General Taksin believed that resistance from inside Ayudhya was impossible, and so went to recruit an army in the east along the coast to drive the Burmese troops away. His mission, however, did not end there. He also endured fights with the other five kinglets who had set up their independence in different parts of the country

and had to unify the country again. But little did the Thais realise that the Burmese would be back to regain control of the country. Taksin fought wars throughout his reign in order to fight off the repeated invasions by the Burmese. In his attempt to defend his country, Taksin was assisted by his two valiant brothers, Thongduang and Bunma who were later to become the first and second (or Wangnah) Kings of the Chakri dynasty. King Taksin reigned for 15 years in his new capital, Dhonburi when he finally became insane and was put to death. He was succeeded by Thongduang who was entitled King Rama I. The Burmese still tried to invade the capital throughout the reign of Rama I right through to the beginning of the reign of Rama II.

It is therefore not correct to say that Dhonburi stood out on its own during this period, for it also merged into the Bangkok period when King Rama I moved his capital Dhonburi to Bangkok in 1782. When Taksin and the early Kings of the Bangkok Dynasty found their country in ruins, they devoted much of their time to rebuild Bangkok and Dhonburi so that it would become the country's cultural and administrative centre, holding all records of glories, past and present. There was a collection of books that have been rewritten to preserve ancient historical stories. Temples were rebuilt with beautiful Thai architecture, paintings and sculptures adorning them. Ancient rites and traditions were recorded in manuscripts, which explained how each were performed in those days and codes of law were enacted. Monks also had to be re-educated in order to properly uphold religious traditions started by The Lord Buddha. King Taksin himself put so much of his heart into Bud-

dhism that he believed himself to know more than the monks. He claimed to have been able to predict the future, to look back into the past and to fly like the arahats or saints. But sadly, he ended up becoming mentally ill and insane.

It was in-between breaks during the constant wars that King Taksin found the time to write some of the important books we now have in possession. King Rama I, his successor, also met with the same fate as King Taksin and became insane, but all the same, everyone went on with the rebuilding of the city. Today, Bangkok is known to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world, with its towering pagodas, its temple walls that are filled with frescoes, sculptures, designs on gables and its gorgeous Buddha images and statues. During war, both Kings had tried to preserve ancient historical objects which belonged to them in their country, so most of the ancient statues ended up being kept in Bangkok. We also have the image of the Emerald Buddha that was brought back from Vientiane and preserved amidst the magnificent Grand Palace. Other princes built temples and palaces around the Grand Palace. The King called his new capital the City of Angels or Krungthep. But as time went by and more people were being educated in the west, modern ideas brought back into our hometown has resulted in grotesque skyscrapers that began to line up Bangkok's horizon. Bangkok is gradually losing its ancient artistic culture and even around the Grand Palace of the liberators of the country, nobody had any more respect for Kings, nor do they remember their past. Skyscrapers were built, overshadowing the splendour of the Grand Palace. Some even tear down old historical buildings, replacing

them with appalling western style architecture. The Americans were the ones who brought about this destructiveness to our country. They even encouraged vandalism of our treasures by putting a price on Thai art, resulting in the heads of Buddha images being stolen from us. King Taksin and Rama I of course would not have been proud of later generations of Thais nor would they have been proud to know of American influence. It is upsetting to see that the faculty of archeology of the University of Fine Arts, the nation's preserver of architectural designs, even constructed a building several storeys high close to the Grand Palace, blocking the breathtaking view of the Grand Palace thus showing disrespect to past Kings.

The work of King Taksin

In order to restore Thai literature back into importance, Kings were prime instigators commissioning literary men either to re-write old literature lost during invasions of Ayudhya or to translate work from abroad. In order to encourage literary creativeness, the Kings themselves usually wrote something themselves for they were poets. Taksin tried to rewrite certain scenes from the Ramayana epic. One of his nobles tried to revive the famous story of Inao but could write only the scene that depicted the abduction of Busba by Inao to live with him in a cave. Another form of literature called the Nirat was also revived, which was a poetic description of a journey in the form of a diary. It is very sentimentally written though because the poet usually pines for his loved one which he had left behind while travelling. One of the Nirats during this period was written by Phya Mahanupap in 1781 during his time as ambassa-

dor to China sent by King Taksin. It was called Nirat Kwangtung (Canton). Another poem written during this period was called "In praise of King Taksin" by a page called Nai Suan in 1771.

Although we did not have much during this period, it was a good thing to have something started. The Kings were the main cause of this inspiration.

King Rama I

After King Taksin started this movement, King Rama I continued with it and wrote the Thai version of the famous Ramayana. This story is also depicted on the four inner walls of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, the masterpiece of Thai frescoes. He also wrote another epic called Unarudha, the story of Inao and the Nirat of Wars with Burma at Tadindaeng. He codified the law of the country and had three copies made, now known as the Law with Three Seals since they bore the three seals of the Kingdom. He also edited the Buddhist Bible, the Tri Pitaka himself with the help of his courtiers. His brother, the King of the Back Palace, also translated a Chinese romance called Saihan.

During the Ayudhya period, the poets and writers looked to India for themes for their writing. King Rama I, however, turned his attention to China and many of his works were based on translations from the original Chinese script. The most famous one was a Chinese Romance of the Three Kingdoms, translated into Thai under the supervision of Phya Phraklang (Hon). The King also asked a group of nobles under the leadership of Phya Phraklang to re-write the story of Rajadhirat or the History of the Mons. This same

person also wrote the famous story in poetic style, called Kaki. Kaki is a love story which involves Phya Garuda (Eagle) who abducted Kaki, wife of King Promatat to his palace up in the clouds. The King sent Kontan to look for her. While Garuda was away in the daytime, Kontan found her and made love to her. When this secret was revealed to Garuda, he no longer wanted to have Kaki back but banished her from his realm instead. She was left to live among thieves, whose chief made her his wife. She was saved by an old King, and it was not until the King died that Kontan decided to have her back. They lived together happily ever after.

As well as worldly literature, religious literature also thrived during this period. The most famous story was the one about Vessantara. Two scenes were written by Phya Phraklang (Hon), the scene of Vessantara's wife, Madhi, and the scene of his two children (Kumarn). Phya Phraklang also wrote a Jataka story of Vichai.

The Vichai Jataka : Vichai was well-educated and had a bird that could speak a language called Surasen. He used this bird as a spy to find out whether all the kingdoms in his territory were faithful to him. One day, he wanted a wife and sent out the bird to find the most beautiful princess for him. The bird came back and told him about the beautiful Princess Srivaiyaka, and how her father refused to give his consent for her to marry. Prince Srivichai therefore set out on a journey in search of the princess. When the learned princess carried a test on the prince, she realised that the Prince was intelligent and agreed to become his wife. There was also another religious poet during the reign of Phra Tepamoli (Klin)

who also used the Vessantara Jataka as his theme. In 1815 he wrote the scene "The Great Offering" for the King.

The King's brother left two Nirats behind, "Nakorn Sritammarat" and "Burmese Wars". Unfortunately large parts of these have been lost.

We cannot speak of the next reign without first mentioning King Rama I's great poetic talents in his creation of the Ramayana epic which is still read everywhere and performed in many places down to this very day.

Ramayana : The story was taken from the old Sanscrit epic of Valmiki, but the sentiments in the story and even certain details have been changed in order to suit with the times. Since the King was involved in many wars, the stories were based from his own experiences at war while various descriptions of love scenes merely explained what happened in his days.

Rama was born on Earth to suppress evil doings by the King of Demons, Totsakan. The King of Ayodhya had two wives. Since Rama and Lakshamana were born of the first Queen, Rama was heir apparent to the throne. The second Queen, Nang Kaiyakesi, however, seduced the King and persuaded him to give the throne to her own son, Barata, instead where Rama was banished to the forest where he lived as a hermit. His brother, Lakshamana, followed him with his wife Sita. One day, Totsakan asked Marit to disguise himself as a golden stag to attract Rama and Lakshamana from the hermitage. Totsakan then came and took Sita away to Lanka. Rama pursued him there where he met an army of monkeys. The chief

monkey, Hanuman, promised to help him out. His power reinforced, Rama went to the island of Lanka where he waged a bloody war on Totsakan. Totsakan's relatives and generals were sent to fight with Rama but were all killed. At last, Totsakan himself confronted Rama but he could not be killed because his soul was living outside his body. It had been kept in a case that was guarded by the hermit. But when Rama shot Totsakan, he simultaneously crushed the case which contained his soul and killed him. When Rama at last found Sita, she proved her purity by walking on burning embers, but Rama was not convinced and, in anger, ordered for her to be executed. Fortunately, she was saved and went to live with a hermit where she gave birth to a son called Phra Lor. The hermit created a second son using magic and named him Phra Butra. Having repented of his misdeeds by this time, Rama went to see his wife. He had a fight with his two sons whom he failed to overpower. Rama was in so much pain at Sita's refusal to reconcile with him that Shiva had to intervene to bring them back together. There are also two other famous stories that were written by Phya Phraklang, one of which was called "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms". This work strayed from other traditional ones mainly because it was translated from an original Chinese historical romance written in prose in the thirteenth century.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms. From historical facts, this story was important in that it also depicted the struggle of the Thais in Yunnan against one of the Chinese generals, Chukuo-Liang or Khun Ming, who beat the Thai army under Benghek seven times

before the latter finally gave in to the Chinese.

It was based upon Chinese history in A.D. 221-265 when China was split up into three kingdoms and the Chinese were fighting against one another. This started when the Chinese emperor became debilitated, turning the country into a state of disorder. The dishonest nobles took this chance to create problems by suppressing the people and performing acts of injustice. When Emperor Laneteh later died, Tangtoh, the Governor of Shilong, came with his army to seize the capital and made Hongchuiap the Emperor. The power, however, was not entirely in the hands of Tangtoh for another noble, Chocho, had tried to get rid of Tangtoh but was unsuccessful in doing so. The nobles then schemed against him by using women to seduce him until finally Tangtoh was killed by Lipoh. Lichui and Kuiki, Tangtoh's friends, however, sought their vengeance and seized control of the government. The Emperor, Hianteh, went to ask for the help of Chocho, who finally overpowered Lichui and Kuiki. Chocho eventually became more powerful than the Emperor who, upon realising this, told his officials from various towns to fight against Chocho. The country was thus split into three sections, one belonging to Sunkuan at Kangtang (Canton) and another part to Laopi. At first, Laopi seemed to be the most popular of the three since he had the help of three very brave warriors, Kuan-U, Tiao-Hui and Chu-long as well as a very learned man called Chukuo-Liang. With the foresight and wisdom of the intelligent Chukuo-Liang, the enemy was always outwitted and defeated. After the deaths of Kuan-U, Tiao-Hui and Chu-long, Laopi was so disheartened that he grieved to death. Chukuo-Liang tried

to help Atou, Laopi's son and successor to fight the wars that were waged against them but also died. The whole country was at last unified by Suma-Ian, who usurped the throne and established a new dynasty in China, putting a final end to the wars between the three Kingdoms.

Rajadhiraj

This was another famous story written by Phya Phraklang (Hon) that deserves mentioning. It was one of the most delightful stories to be told before western literature was introduced into the country. It was meant to be acted out on stage, especially the scene where Phya Noi goes to the market and meets a beautiful market woman called Moey-Choeng, wife of Mathor. Phya Noi was so besotted by her that he would not listen to reason and kidnapped her back to his palace where he made her his wife. It was a very romantic story.

It also started with the story of a Shan by the name of Magato who came to the court of Rama Kamhaeng in Sukothai as a gardener. Magato was a clever and very faithful man. One day King Rama Kamhaeng gave him a cowrie shell with which he used to buy lettuce seeds. He planted the seeds in his garden and presented the lettuce harvest to the King. When the King gave him four more cowrie shells, Magato bought a rose bush and gave the flowers to Princess Soidao, the King's daughter. The two fell in love and eloped to Martaban where he seized the town to become King. He then surrendered himself to the King Rama Kamhaeng who gave him the title of Fahruea (Wareru). The name signifies the founder of the

Mon Kingdom of Pegu or Hongswadi. Wars between the Burmese and the Mons continued to take place but the Mons had so many brave warriors on their side as well as supernatural powers that they were the ones who ended up victorious.

Literature during the second reign (1809-1824)

King Rama II was a great writer and wrote many plays and poems himself as well as commissioned work from his men in court. He encouraged and revived the art of play-acting, synchronising it with the script and combining it with music and dances. He also paid close attention to costumes so that his audience would be able to appreciate not only the sweet-sounding music but also the beauty of the stage presentation. Through him, a new style of play developed, straying from tedious movements and elaborate lines that would usually bored the audience.

Other famous poets of the time included names like Sunthorn Bhoo, the author of the ubiquitous “Phra Abhai Manee” : the Prince Patriarch Paramanuchit Chinoros, who wrote renowned works such as “Talaing Defeat”, “Pathama Samabodhi” (the Life Story of The Lord Buddha) and “Krishna teaches her Sister”. The “Talaing Defeat” was studied in schools, the “Pathama Samabodhi” was used to teach monks and novices in temples and “Krishna teaches her Sister” was used by schools and taught as one of the most poetic compositions ever to have been written. There was also another famous poet called Nai Narindha Thibes (In) who wrote a Nirat when he was on an expedition against the Burmese in the south of Thailand with the second King.

The King himself also wrote important works such as “Inao” and “Sangthong” (the Prince in the Conch) among scores of others such as Ramakirti, Kawi, Chaiyachet, Sangsilpachai, Kraithong and Manee Pichai. One of the greatest stories of Suparn to have ever been written was “Khun Charng Khun Paen”, which is still very much read by young and old alike because it is filled with so much musical charm and excitement.

In the outline above, we know that the period of Rama II was the age of fine poets and creations of great masterpieces of Thai literature that it was known as the Golden Age. Sunthorn Bhoo was perhaps the greatest poet during the Bangkok period while Sriprat was the bard of the Ayudhya period.

Rama II and his literary work

Rama II had revived many of the plays and stories of the late Ayudhya period. Work like Inao by Princess Mongkut and others during King Boromakote's reign such as Sangthong, Sangsilpachai, Kraithong, Chaiyachet etc. would have been lost and forgotten had it not been retold and passed down from generation to generation. Among these masterpieces, King Rama II re-wrote the whole story of Inao as well as Sangthong, which were work that gained him his great name. The themes of these two wonderful stories have already been outlined earlier on in this book.

Khun Charng Khun Phaen : This is a local story collected from Suparnburi, some parts of which was the King's contribution to literature such as the amorous incident between Plaikeo

and Miss Pim. Khun Phaen (or Plaikeo) followed his old love (Miss Pim) who had been kidnapped by Khun Charnng, in order to get her back. While his son, Rama III wrote the part concerning Wantong, Sunthorn Bhoo wrote about the birth of Charnng following Plai-Ngarm etc.

The story revolves around the love of two men for the same woman. While Khun Phaen was handsome and heroic as he was a great warrior, Khun Charnng was ugly and bald but very rich and was known to have a very good heart. However, since he could not afford to be kind to his enemy Khun Phaen, he used all sorts of tricks to get Khun Phaen out of his way. He sent Khun Phaen out on a mission one day so that he could have Miss Pim all to himself, even though she was already married to Khun Phaen. When Khun Phaen returned, he accused him of high treason and sent him to prison. One day, the King of Larncharng was on his way to present his daughter, Princess Soithong, to the King of Ayudhya, but the King of Chiangmai sent an army to kidnap the princess back to Chiangmai on the way. The King of Ayudhya was furious and planned an expedition against the King of Chiangmai but found no one suitable to lead the expedition. This was when Khun Phaen was pardoned and put in command of the expedition. Khun Phaen of course came back victorious and was promoted Governor of Karnburi.

The story was typically resplendent with elements of magic, charms, ghosts and supernatural powers as was the people's beliefs at the time and the heroes, often idolised by all the women, would marry the maidens they rescue, for men were allowed to have se-

veral wives in those days. Polygamy was permitted especially if practised by great men because women adored them. Hermits with supernatural powers would educate them and teach them how to make themselves invisible, how to create an army of men from tamarind leaves, how to turn a wax statue into a magic horse and how to give life back to the dead, etc.

Sunthorn Bhoo (1786-1856)

Sunthorn Bhoo was the greatest poet during the Bangkok period and was remembered by his ubiquitous piece of work, Phra Abhai Manee. Quite different from other poets who were great nobles and princes of the court, Sunthorn Bhoo was the people's person, a man born from a deprived background, stricken with poverty and left without a home.

He was born in Rayong in a small village called Klaeng which one will see on the way to Chantaburi. He was educated at a temple in Dhonburi, Wat Chipakhao where he joined the service of the royal scribes and rose to fame from his skill in poetry. King Rama II liked him a great deal and always consulted with him when it came to writing poems. He was, however, disliked by the King's successor (later to be entitled Rama III) because the King would rather accept his own amendments than the prince's. When King Rama II died, Bhoo fled from court to enter the monkhood where his nomadic life began again. When he left the monkhood, he found himself a patron called Prince Lakhnanukun but was again alone when he died. Wandering about without a home, he sometimes got financial assistance from Prince Mahamala (Malakul) who gave

him money every now and again. He then met Prince Isaret who gave him permission to go and live in the old palace where he sought assistance from Princess Absornsudadhep who loved his story about Phra Abhai Manee.

He became more stable towards the last five years of his life when during the accession of Phra Pinklao as second King, he was appointed head of the royal scribes. He died five years later at the age of seventy.

Apart from Phra Abhai Manee and a few lullabies, other work included Nirats (travel poems), the stories of Phra Chaisuriya, Kobutra, Singha Kraipop and Laksanawongse.

His stories were the most poetic and had immense musical charm as well as elements on philosophies of life. Some of these have become well-known proverbs such as

“There may be many things you can have, but there is nothing like having knowledge. To know how to avoid trouble and to save yourself from trouble is the best thing to possess.”

“If you have a shilling, save until you have a pound.”

“Do not boast of your wealth and distribute it as though you were thatching the roof over an entire field for it would only be the cause of your ruin. There is nobody to help us in times of trouble so do not be easy with money for it is the most important thing in life.”

“As the saying goes, in times of love, even the soup from bitter vegetables tastes sweet, but when love dies, even sugar will taste bitter.”

“There can be no other sadness that is as great as the love

for one's husband. Even if it means giving up some of one's gold, one should choose to do so rather than give up the love for one's husband."

"One can count the thirty two complicated bends, but one can never count the crookedness in men."

The story of Phra Abhai Manee: It was the story of his life that was filled with so many daring adventures, for the hero wandered about everywhere, overcoming one obstacle to face with another. It is a story which took place mostly in the sea based on the author's dreams. Unique in its own right, the story records his travels to distant lands where he meets with the Chinese, the Europeans and the Singhalese. This story earned him his prestige and it was through renting copies of these stories to interested readers that he got any income at all, for he was poor throughout most of his life. It was only after his death that his books became popular and were constantly printed and sold well.

Phra Abhai and his brother were one day sent by their father to get an education, but Phra Abhai came back knowing how to play the flute while his brother came back skilled at swordfighting. Seeing that they had not learnt anything practical, their father drove them out of the house, little realising that the kind of flute playing Phra Abhai had learnt was a magic one that put people to sleep or made people leave their souls and die.

On the way, the two brothers met three Brahmins, Mora, Sanon and Vichien who asked him to play the flute for them. When Phra Abhai started playing a few notes, they were all put to sleep

by the music when a female ogre kidnapped Phra Abhai to her cave. She transformed herself into a beautiful girl and lived with Phra Abhai until they had a son together named Sin Samut. When Phra Abhai found out about the true identity of his wife, he fled with his son, with the help of a family of mermaids. Eventually, the mother and father mermaid were killed while the youngest one managed to escape to Wonder Island with Phra Abhai and his son where the hermit on the island had saved her. Unfortunately, the giant also happened to live there. The mermaid later gave birth to a son with Phra Abhai called Sut Sakorn. One day, when Phra Abhai saw a ship carrying King Silarat of Phluek with his daughter Princess Suvarnamali who was engaged to Prince Usren of Lanka passing by, Phra Abhai and Sin Samut asked if they could come along. On the way, the giant attacked the ship and killed King Silarat. Phra Abhai and his party managed to escape to shore where Phra Abhai hastily played his flute to kill the giant. Sin Samut swam ashore with Princess Suvarnamali to an island, where they met a pirate who welcomed them into his ship but later attacked the princess. Having thus killed the pirate, Sin Samut and the princess continued on their journey and met Srisuvan, her uncle, and his daughter Arun Rasmi at Ramachak. They now went searching for Phra Abhai together. Coincidentally, Phra Abhai met Usren who was looking for his fiancée, Suvarnamali, so they went together to meet Sin Samut and Suvarnamali. Phra Abhai called upon Sin Samut to give Suvarnamali up to Usren, but Suvarnamali refused to do so. Both helped fly back to Lanka. Phra Abhai came back to Phluek where Silarat's Queen had asked Phra Abhai to rule the Kingdom.

Suvarnamali was still angry with Phra Abhai for having dared to give her up to Usren and decided to become a nun with Sin Samut and Arun Rasmi. In the disguise of lady-in-waiting called Nang Valee, Suvarnamali left the nunnery to become Phra Abhai's consort where she bore him two daughters called Soi-Suvarn and Chanta-Suda.

Upon arriving at Lanka, Usren told his father about this who became very angry. They came back to attack Phluek where Phra Abhai was now King. The father was killed and Usren was captured and died of a broken heart while in captivity. The throne of Lanka now belonged to his sister, Nang Laveng who was reputed for her unrivalled beauty. Nang Laveng decided to take her revenge and declared to all the princes in neighbouring countries that whoever was able to kill Phra Abhai would have her hands in marriage as well as her Kingdom. Nine armies from neighbouring countries therefore moved on to surround Phluek. Phra Abhai followed Nang Laveng and won her love but the war continued until the hermit from Wonder Island came and stopped the war between the two sides.

Laksanawongse : This is another story by Sunthorn Bhoo that is widely read by all. Prommatat and his Queen Suvarna-Ampa, had a son called Laksanawongse. One day they went into the forest and found an ogress who accused Suvarna-Ampa and Laksanawongse of plotting against the King. Having found out about this, the King ordered their execution, but out of sympathy for them, the executioner let them go. On the way to the forest, a giant kid-

napped Suvarna-Ampa. While Laksanawongse was out in search of his mother, he met a hermit and a maid called Kesorn. The hermit taught him the art of fighting and gave him an invincible bow as well as a magic horse which carried him through the air and took him to the giant city where his mother was to be found. He killed the giant and went to his father's town with an army of giants and captured the ogress who was in disguise.

Laksanawongse now went in search of Kesorn. The hermit was dead and Nang Kesorn had been saved by five Kinnari maidens, who all became Laksanawongse's wives. Upon returning from their journey, Kesorn was abducted by a vichatorn who was in turn attacked by another vichatorn. They both ended up killing each another. Kesorn disguised herself as a Brahmin in his search of Laksanasongse who also went in search of Kesorn and arrived at a giant's town where he met Yisun whom he made his wife. The disguised Brahmin now arrived at the town but Yisun accused him of trying to rape her so Laksanawongse ordered that he be executed. Before her death the Brahmin in disguise still managed to deliver a son but when Laksanawongse discovered Kesorn's true identity, it was already too late.

The Talaing Defeat: A few words ought to be said about this great work which was written by the Prince Supreme Patriarch of Thailand during the second reign. It was the story about one of the Burmese invasions after King Naresuan declared independence. King Naresuan of Ayudhya had been taken to the Burmese court where he was held hostage. When he grew up, he helped the Bur-

mese conquer Muang Rum Muang Kang (Mogaung), a task which other Burmese commanders had been unable to do. Because of his valour, the Burmese were afraid of him and thought of getting rid of him. When Naresuan was told of the plot, he fled Pegu and declared Ayudhya's independence from the Burmese troops. Meanwhile, the King of Burma had sent his son, the viceroy, after him. Naresuan's army also came but his elephant walked right in the middle of the Burmese army accompanied by his brother Ekatotsarot. Naresuan kept his calm and challenged the Burmese viceroy to fight with him singlehandedly. Naresuan managed to kill the viceroy and Ekatotsarot in the combat, with the help of the Prince of Zapporo (Mangchacharo) and their army drove the Burmese troops out. Naresuan then built a pagoda to enshrine the ashes of the viceroy on the battlefield which was supposed to be the site recently discovered at Don-Chedi. King Naresuan however was very angry with his generals for having left him to fight on his own against the Burmese army and ordered their execution. The Supreme Patriarch intervened and asked the King to pardon them, but he only agreed on the condition that they conquered Tavoy and Mergui for him. When they finally did, the King pardoned them.

This story was written to glorify the heroic deeds of King Naresuan who liberated the country from Burmese control in 1592 by killing the Crown Prince in a single duel combat on elephant's back.

Sappasit : This is another story written by the Prince Supreme Patriarch and was taken from the Jataka tales. Princess

Suparna-Sobha was born banned from talking to men because she had been deceived by so many people in her former life. With this, King Usupparaj, her father promised the hands of his daughter in marriage to the person who could make her talk. Prince Sappasit, son of King Vichai who had learnt the art of embodying souls into another medium, came forward and volunteered. He went to his friend Chitasen and invited his soul to leave his body to embody a stick instead. When Prince Sappasit went into her chamber, he began to tell her a story. The first was about four merchants who found a piece of red sandalwood. The first one carved it into a shape of a beautiful woman, the second dressed it, the third one breathed soul into it and gave it life, while the fourth one courted it. The four started to argue about who was her rightful owner since they all played a part in creating her. Sappasit then asked Chitasen who was residing in a stick, to tell them who should possess her by right, to which the stick replied that it was the one who had carved her. This enraged the princess, who told the stick that it should be the one who gave her her clothes. Sappasit then told the second story about four women who tried to please a bandit so that he would take one of them to be his wife. One gave him food, one bathed him, one washed his face and one cleaned his dishes for him. Concerning whom the bandit should choose to be his wife, Chitasen's soul residing in the stick said that the one who cleans the dishes should be his wife. Objecting, the princess said that it really should be the one who feeds him. Sappasit went onto the third question which was to state which was softer, cotton or the skin of a woman. In the form of the stick, Chitasen said that cotton

was softer. Again, the princess objected and was enraged to hear this, claiming that the skin of a woman was no doubt softer than cotton, but even so, a husband's love for his wife is the most tender of all. Having heard her speak three times, the drummers outside roared three times and the princess was handed over to Sappasit. On their journey home, the princess was kidnapped by a giant. A hermit helped Sappasit by giving him a magic horse and a magic bow allowing him to fight with the giant and to win the princess back. When they returned safely to the prince's country, they both lived happily ever after as man and wife.

The Third Reign

There was not much development in literature during this reign, although writers from the second reign still continued to produce more of their work. Even Sunthorn Bhoo fled in the King's presence because western influence had begun to make such a strong impact on the Thais in general. Although printing was introduced into the country since the first reign by French missionaries, local residents were not familiar with it because they were still using roman characters and because printing was only limited to religious books. Captain James Lowe was the first to have invented Thai character type faces and printed the first book on Thai grammar in 1828 in Bengal (Calcutta). In 1835, American missionaries brought the printing machine into the country. Two years later, Dr. Bradley set up his own printing house where the type faces still had to be ordered from abroad. It was not until 1841 that type faces were made in Bangkok. The Thai government now had, for the first

time, 9000 copies of the decree prohibiting the smoking of opium printed in 1839. There had been no books printed for public sale at the time until 1862, when "The London Journey of Mom Rajothai" was bought by missionaries and started to print books for sale. Books became more widespread during the fifth reign, when the first newspaper was printed by Dr. Bradley in 1844 called the "Public Recorder". In short, the Third reign paved the way in printing for the fourth and fifth reigns. King Rama IV at the time, had been the abbot at Bovorn Nivet Temple and was so interested in printing that he set up a printing house in the temple in order to print his own books on Buddhism. When he was enthroned as King, he moved his printing house to the Grand Palace and used it to print official publications as well as copies of his own Royal Gazette.

Writers during this period concentrated on less serious topics and produced more humorous and sarcastic works. Work characteristic of this genre included a book called "Raden Landai" written by Maha Montri, who satirized his people for liking Inao.

Another kind of literary composition which arose during this time was what was known as "Sakawa" where a company of singers with musical instruments would go about aimlessly in their boats during festivals and would extemporaneously sing of love upon encountering the opposite sex and encourage them to turn their boat in the same direction as theirs.

The most famous poem of this kind was about a woman by the name of Mrs Poom, the daughter of Phya Rajmontri (Bhoo) who resided in a boathouse at Tha Phra in front of the Grand Palace. She was a jolly person, had very sharp wits and was loved

by everybody. Her house was a meeting place for anyone who wished to admire her poetic skills. She was at the service of Princess Sudarat Rajprayura and lived on until the fifth reign.

Two more things which should be mentioned during this period were the inscriptions of maxims on the wall of Wat Poh. Prince Dechadisorn wrote a number of maxims in poetic style called Lokanitti which were taken from old poems during the Ayudhya period. This collection of poems told men how to conduct themselves properly and also gave them a few words of wisdom which they were to use as guidelines. These have been written on the walls of Wat Poh and an example of one of them reads, "When the fig is still ripe, its red colour may look attractive but only when one peels it, will one discover that it has already been eaten by worms. Similarly, it is hard to see through the angelic appearance of evil men."

King Rama III also tried to assemble as much knowledge as possible from the many learned men that existed in those times and recorded them in the form of wall inscriptions in his temple. His wish was to turn it into a temple university.

The Fourth Reign

Since King Rama IV spent twenty seven years in the temple before he ascended the throne, he became the master of the Pali language and of prose. He constantly taught his people how to use the right words for the right occasion and not to confuse similar sounding words with one another. He had written many prayers which are still in use today and also wrote sermons. He was also a great researcher. It was he who brought the Sukothai inscription

stone of King Rama Kamhaeng down to Bangkok and made the first attempt to translate it into modern Thai. The King, however, was a prose writer at heart and enjoyed writing about eclipses, since astrology was one of his favourite subjects. He also wrote in English and liked to tell foreigners about the customs, traditions, religions and the history that belonged to his hometown. Although his English was not entirely perfect, his invaluable writings did much to preserve a part of Thai history in the minutest of details. He also contributed to Dr. Bradley's newspaper, *The Bangkok Recorder* where he wrote about his ancestors since the days of the famous Kosaparn and told us about the Loy Krathong ceremony and how it was introduced to the country by King Ram Kamhaeng's consort, Nang Nopamas. He also wrote about Cambodian history.

Another renowned poet during this reign was Phya Issaranuparp (On) who wrote stories on Sudhon, Sudhanu and Uten.

Sudhon is a story about the prince's love for Manohra, a half-bird half-woman reputed for her unrivalled beauty. She lived far away on top of a mountain that was filled with perils.

Sudhanu was a story based on the Jataka tales. Sudhanu had a magic horse which carried him to the Kingdom of Princess Chiraprabha where he lifted the famous heavy bow which nobody else had been able to lift. With such an accomplishment, he won the love of Chiraprabha. Other princely suitors now raised their armies to attack him out of jealousy but failed to overpower him. On the way home with his princess, they decided to rest in a giant's territory. According to the law of the land, they were required to

answer questions that the giant asked them to a certain degree of satisfaction. The giant Kantara asked Prince Sudhanu the first question to which he gave a good answer. For the second question, the horse gave its answer satisfactorily but when asked the third question, the princess was by now too exhausted to give a decent answer, and so was kidnapped by the giant. The horse came to her rescue and began to fight with the giant. When the giant took away the horse, the couple continued their journey by foot. They saw a ship which sank as soon as they boarded it, separating them. The prince landed somewhere where he was rescued by Kantara's sister, Anchanvadi, who made him her husband. Anchanvadi now brought the magic horse which carried Sudhanu away through the air in search of Chiraprabha. He came back with an army, killed Kantara and was again united with Anchavadi who was taken back with him to his home country. The three lived happily ever after in the town of Benares.

The story of Uten : King Parantapa was out in the garden with his Queen one day when a bird called Husdin swooped down from above and took her away. She was taken to a tree top where she eventually gave birth to a son called Uten. They lived with a hermit who taught Prince Uten how to tame elephants and also gave him a guitar. When his father died, he came back down to town with a herd of elephants and asked to marry Samawadi, the daughter of a rich merchant.

The King of a neighbouring country, Chantaprachote, wanted to know about his secrets in taming elephants so badly that he sent

an army with wooden elephants to trap him. When Uten was captured, Chantaprachote sent his daughter, Vasulatat, to get him to tell her his secrets, but Uten wooed her into becoming his wife and they both eloped. Nang Kantiya who was jealous of her, put a snake in the guitar and accused Samavadi of having done it. Uten then ordered her execution but she escaped unharmed because she had performed many meritorious deeds to The Lord Buddha. Uten later discovered the truth and pardoned her.

The description of an Embassy in London

In 1857, King Mongkut sent an ambassador, Phya Montri Suriwongse to London with a present. This was the first time for a Thai to visit England. The journey was a long one since the Suez Canal had not yet been built in those days. The ambassador and his party went on camels across the Isthmus to Alexandria, where another ship was waiting for them. Mom Rajothai was appointed to act as interpreter. During their visit, they got to experience electricity, trains, telegraphs and telephones, facilities which were still unheard of in Thailand. Mom Rajothai recorded everything he had witnessed in his diary and also wrote a poetic version of his journey to London called "Nirat London". He then had it published by with Dr. Bradley in 1862, and it was the first Thai book ever to have been published for sale.

Events during the Fifth Reign

Literature came to a standstill during this period for it was a time of great upheavals where foreign expansion in this part of the

world was on the rise. King Chulalongkorn had to turn his attention to drastic administrative reforms and to dealing with diplomatic crises which occurred endlessly. Despite the chaos, though, he still found free time to write what are now important pieces of work, one called "The Ceremonies of the Twelve Months" and two other plays, one based on The Arabian Nights called "Nitra Chakrit" (The sleeper awakened) and one on the love of a Sagai couple. The Sagais were people who lived in the forests of southern Thailand. The King was also a master of prose writing. In 1906 he went on a tour in Europe where he visited various courts where he wrote a series of letters to his daughter, Princess Nibhanopadol describing his journey including descriptions of customs, traditions, governments, administration, the towns, cities and the people he had encountered. These letters were kept together in a volume called "Kraiban" (Far from Home) and it was the perfect example of prose writing.

Nitra Chakrit

This is a story about a Sultan called Haroun Al Raschid who liked to disguise himself as a commoner in order to integrate himself with his people. He went drinking with a man called Abu Hassan one day who told him how he wished to be a King for just one day and how he would have all the wicked monks and their followers severely punished for their deceptive ways. Having heard this, the Sultan put some sleeping potion into Abu Hassan's drink, secretly took him to his palace, dressed him in his royal garments and tucked him in his bed. Abu Hassan woke up surprised to have maids at-

tending to him and nobles inviting him over to the audience hall to make decisions on court matters. Believing that he really was a King, Abu Hassan did as he had always wanted and meted out severe punishments to the monks he believed to be evil. When he woke up the next morning and acted as though he were King, little realising that he had already been taken back to his own home, everyone thought that he was insane.

When the Sultan went to see him, Abu Hassan avoided him completely, so the Sultan had to disguise himself as a merchant. This time, he had dinner with Abu Hassan. During the meal, the Sultan learned that Abu Hassan wanted to marry the beautiful maiden he had seen back at the palace, so the Sultan promised to help. Abu Hassan was given the sleeping potion again and brought back to the palace where he woke up in a state of fear. The royal maidens later reassured him that he really was King and that he had never left the palace grounds. Happy to hear this, Abu Hassan began to dance and sing with the royal maidens. The Sultan, who had been hiding behind the curtains, was unable to contain himself at the sight of Abu Hassan rejoicing and burst out laughing. When Abu Hassan saw the Sultan, he remembered that he was the merchant who gave him the sleeping potion and started to hurl abuse at him, but when he later realised that he really was the Sultan, Abu Hassan knelt down in shame. He was later appointed an official of the palace and was married to the beautiful lady attendant of Queen Sobiday.

The Sagai (Ngo Pa). This story was written by the King in

1906 and is based on the Sagais in Yala province. The story is a tragic love story similar to that of Romeo and Juliet's.

One day, Lamhap, a beautiful girl from the village of Sagai, was out strolling with her sister when a snake suddenly wrapped itself around her arms. Sompla, a young man who was secretly in love with her who happened to be nearby, rushed to the rescue and killed the snake. The two later fell in love with each other. The only problem was, Sompla was a very poor man. One day another young man, Hanao, came to ask her parents for Lamhap's hands in marriage. When they agreed, Sompla was very upset to learn of this and eloped with her to live in a cave on the day that she was due to be married. Thinking that she had been taken away involuntarily, Hanao went in search of her and found Sompla in front of the cave. A long fight ensued where Hanao was nearly killed when a mysterious poisoned arrow was shot at Sompla. When he collapsed, Lamhap ran over to support his head in her laps. When Sompla died, Laphap killed herself after him, and Hanao, who could not bear the pain of seeing his fiancée die also killed himself after her. After that tragedy, the whole village moved out as was the custom at that time when any death occurred in the village.

Since King Rama V made vast educational reforms, he required a great deal of textbooks. The first man to have written a series of books that were used in primary schools was Phya Sri-Sunthorn-Voharn (Noi Acharayangkura). The first in the series was called *Mulabot Bappakit*, with 2000 copies published in 1871 followed by 14 more. The books were a compendium of knowledge

written in poetic style especially for Thai children, which gave insight into interesting morals. There were two more people who wrote about this subject, the first is Prince Damrong who wrote the "Rapid Reader" and Phya Sri Vorawongse who wrote the first spelling book, for students in temples.

The number of textbooks mostly written in Thai, had since then increased so greatly that the Ministry of Education later set up a School Textbook Bureau in the Department of Educational Technique after World War II, where they supervised, approved and even wrote some of the textbooks themselves. They also set up one of the biggest printing houses in the country under the auspices of the Teachers' Institute and published and distributed their own textbooks on a large scale.

At first, all this was not possible for students who had reached the secondary level of education since all their textbooks were in English. But this is no longer the case since the existence of Thai textbooks is apart from when they are learning English as a subject.

King Rama VI and his colleagues

After a dormant phase which lasted for three reigns, Thai literature became active once again during the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925). He was the first Thai monarch to become both a soldier as well as a statesman and because he was educated in England, he was very familiar with western ways. He could write equally well in English, French and Thai. While still a student in Europe, he wrote "The Wars of the Polish Succession" and edited two maga-

zines called "The Screech Owl" and the "Looker-On". He was a literary figure and was a fine writer of prose as well as poetry. He wrote plays and also took part in acting in some of them. His writings not only provided his readers with entertainment alone, but also expressed his sentiments and strong feeling of patriotism and his desire for social uplifting. They were often filled with humour and sarcasm. He lived during the colonial expansion of the French, during the time when they were afraid of Thai retaliation and tried to limit Thai military expansion and marked a 25 kilometre demilitarised zone along the frontier. In order to preserve the country from further foreign invasion, the King tried to rouse patriotism among his people and to tune their minds to become more military inclined. "If you want peace," he said, "be prepared for war." But he was not able to organise his army of soldiers as well as he had wanted to because he was constantly under the suspicious eyes of the French. Because of this, he set up a new organisation that dealt with youths and civilians only. He first started the Boy Scouts' Movement in all schools, then established another one for adults among his civil servants called the Wild Tigers' Corps. The King put his heart and soul into this latter organisation. Many of his writings bore traces of his desire to boost patriotism by loving the fatherland, apparent especially in his addresses to members of the organisation. He wrote articles under various pseudonyms for the papers and magazines for which he was editor. When the First World War (1914-1918) broke out in Europe, he joined the Allies and declared war on Germany, called them German Huns and accused them of being barbarians. He wrote "History of the Huns" and in a

book called “Dhamma Songgram”, said that in the end, justice will win over injustice. He often made caricatures, and although a humble artist, his drawings greatly showed his sense of humour and his way of thinking. The King was a voracious writer and was granted the posthumous title of “The Great Sage” (Maha Dhiraraj Chao). Among the pseudonyms he used were Sri-Ayudhya, Ramachitti, Phra Khanpetcha, Panlaem, the Green Cock and Asvabhahu, etc.

He also translated Shakespearean plays such as “Romeo and Juliet” and “The Merchant of Venice” and did it so well that the new version was admired throughout and even used in schools as literature textbooks. He had sometimes been inspired by English and French literature and was also very often influenced by Sanskrit and Indian literature which he adored. Examples of these were “The Ten Reincarnations of Narai” from Hindu mythology, “Nala”, “Savitri”, “Madhanabadha” and “Sakuntra”. One of his plays, “Phra Ruang” was based on Thai history.

The story of Madhanabadha (written in 1923)

There was a god by the name of Sutet who was in love with the goddess Madhana, but his love was not reciprocated. As a punishment, he therefore sent her down to Earth in the form of a rose where she will be allowed to become a woman for one day and one night on the day of the full moon. Only until she learns to love again will she be transformed back into a woman permanently. The other condition is that her love for that person will have fatal consequences if she did not promise to be loyal to him forever.

Madhana was born on Earth as a rose near a hermitage of

Kalatassin. When she was transformed back into a woman, the hermit who lived there loved her as if she were his own daughter. One day King Chaiyasen came by, saw her and fell in love with her, so he asked the hermit for her hands in marriage. Chaiyasen had another Queen, Nang Chantee, who was very jealous of her when she found out about Chaiyasen's love for her and sent a message to her father to attack his kingdom. She also accused Madhana of having been unfaithful to Chaiyasen, secretly loving one of his own generals, Subhang. Furious, Chaiyasen ordered the execution of Madhana after he had successfully driven the enemy away. The hermit came to save the life of Madhana and reunited her with him. When Chaiyasen found out that Subhang had been his most faithful general and that Madhana had not betrayed him, Chaiyasen followed Madhana to her place of execution but found that she had already escaped. He thus followed her to the hermitage. In the meantime, Madhana had asked for Sutet and begged him to allow her to love in peace. Sutet was very angry to hear this and put a curse on her which turned her into a rose for the rest of her life. Chaiyasen, still in love with his wife, carried the rose plant back to his palace.

Savitri, a play written in 1925 was also taken from Sanskrit literature which described the harrowing scene of a woman's fiery love for her husband. When Savitri's father allowed her to choose a husband, she chose Satyavan despite the hermit's warning that he only had one year to live. Because Satyavan had lost his kingdom, she went to live with him in the forest where they went together to fell trees for firewood everyday. One day, Satyavan suddenly col-

lapsed and died in her arms. She then saw Yama, the God of Death approaching Satyavan and preparing to take his soul away. She followed Yama and begged for him to give him back to her but Yama was adamant to do so, telling her that he would grant any other wish apart from that. Savitri finally agreed to make another wish which was to be blessed with 100 children to which Yama agreed to do. Savitri then asked how it was possible for her to have children when she did not have a husband. Outsmarted, Yama willingly gave Satyavan back to her so as not to break his promise.

The story of **Phra Ruang** is a play based on history. As overlords, the Khmers had told Phra Ruang to collect water from Lopburi and take it to their capital of Angkor (Intapat) for ceremonial rites. Water was contained in earthen jars back in those days which were carried off the beaten tracks through the jungle. Because many jars normally leaked along the way before reaching their destination, Phra Ruang made containers out of bamboo strips and painted them over with a layer of lacquer so that they no longer leaked. Intimidated by Phra Ruang's intelligence, the Khmers plotted against his life by sending Phya Decho to kill him. Phra Ruang fled and became a monk at a monastery in Sukothai. Because Decho did not know him, he asked the monk as to the whereabouts of Phra Ruang. Auguring danger, Phra Ruang called his men to help arrest Decho. The Thai army drove the Khmers out and invited Phra Ruang to become their King. The story ended with the famous poem which read "Thais should not destroy one another, but rather should be united as one. Thais must not kill each other, but rather help each

other to protect our country so that we will become honorable and be admired by all. Thais must help to promote the glory of their country so that we will be well-known throughout the world." This song is now sung by every Thai.

Sakuntra is a play about a girl who was an adopted daughter of the hermit Kanavanumi. One day, King Tussyant came to the forest, fell in love with her and married her. He gave her a ring and went back so that she could follow him with a grand procession afterwards. One day a hermit visitor came and knocked on her door but because she was so slow in opening it, the hermit became very angry and lay a curse on her that would make her unlucky in love. When she asked for his forgiveness, he gave in to her pleas and said "As long as the King sees the ring, he will remember you." Sakuntra went in a grand procession to the palace but, on the way, dropped the ring into the river, so when she arrived at court, King Tussyant could not remember her. She went away and was taken up to Heaven by a goddess. One day a fisherman had found the ring inside a fish and showed it to the King who suddenly remembered who it belonged to. In a desperate search for Sakuntra, he was confronted by a giant, fought with him and overpowered him. Finally, Indra, the God of Heaven took him to see Sakuntra who had by now given birth to a son. The three then returned to their kingdom together.

Nala is a poetic story written in 1913, based on a story taken from Sanskrit literature. At the wedding ceremony between Nala and Princess Damayanti, the gods had all given their blessings to

the couple, except the two devils, Kali and Twaborn, who arrived late. They held a grudge against the couple for this and Kali lay a curse on Nala that he would constantly be faced with misfortune. Because of this, when Nala lost a game of chess to his brother Buskorn one day, he was made to leave the country with Damayanti. But because Kali's curse was still on him, he argued with Damayanti and left him. He then met a royal serpent, the Naga, whose life he saved from a vicious forest fire. In return, the Naga transformed Nala into a different form and gave him a magic cloth which, when worn, would allow him to become his normal self again. The serpent invited him to come and live with Ratubarn, the master of chess where Nala became his charioteer. Damayanti now returned to her country and sent out spies to look for Nala. One of them came back and told her how Ratubarn's charioteer looked very much like Nala. Damayanti then carried out a ceremony for choosing a husband. Ratubarn hurried to the ceremony and taught Nala the magic with which he could use to beat people at chess and for his horse to go faster. Nala went back with Damayanti to play chess with his brother and won back his Kingdom.

Writers during King Rama VI's reign

The King encouraged good writers and often suggested themes for them to base their work on. During those days, princes and ministers were also writers and administrators and among them were Prince Nara, Prince Damrong, Prince Bidhya (known by his pen name Normorsor) and Chao Phya Dharmasakti (education minister) who wrote under the name of Krutep and Phya Sri-

Sunthorn Voharn).

Prince Nara (1816-1913)

Prince Nara was also a Minister of Finance as well as an author and a playwright. He modernised play-acting to the standards of European operas and operettes where actors talked and sung instead of danced. He called this new kind of more realistic play, the "Pridalai Theatre" which soon became very popular in Thailand and influenced many theatres. He also wrote a modern play called "Miss Kruahfah" which was inspired by Madame Butterfly. The heroine here was a young girl from Chiangmai while the hero was an officer from Bangkok who had been posted there. They fell in love with each other but was soon after moved back to the capital where Miss Kruahfah promised to be faithful to him and to await his return. While in Bangkok, the officer was forced by his parents to marry someone he did not love. When he went back to Chiangmai with his wife in an attempt to find her, Kruahfah thought that he had already forgotten about her and so locked herself up in her room and committed suicide. Before the officer could explain everything to her, she gave him one last smile and died.

The prince also wrote a classical play called "**Phra Law**" which was a legend taken from the north. One day, Phra Law, the hero, moved in secretly to live with two beautiful young princesses from a neighbouring country but, coincidentally, his father was leading an expedition in that area and killed the grandfather of the princesses. Still bitter about the death of her husband, the grand-

mother of the princesses sent an army of soldiers to kill the son of her enemy whom she found out was with her granddaughters. The prince and his two lovers courageously defended themselves and managed to flee with each of their attendants.

He wrote other plays such as “King Thibaw”, “Kraithong”, “Alasnam” and “The Necklace” and also worked a bit on history with books such as “The History of Burma”, “The History of the Shans” and “The Diary of La Loubere”. He also wrote Arab tales in poetic style which was based on “The Arabian Nights.”

Prince Bidhya (1876-1945)

The Prince was one of the sons of the second King, Bovorn Vichaichan (Wangnah) who went to England for a year in 1897 and came back to serve his country in the Ministry of Finance. He was a poet of great renown because all his poems sounded like music. He also wrote stories such as “Nala”, “Kanok Nakorn”, and “The Three Cities” which is a historical poem and he also edited a number of magazines to which he contributed some of his articles. Among them was the well-known collection of witty letters he wrote to his son while he was still a student in England called “Changwang Ram’s Letters.”

Prince Damrong (1862-1943)

Prince Damrong was a man of great intellect and with an inquisitive mind. He did a thorough research on Thai history and rendered it its present modern form. Apart from being a scholar, he

was also the Minister of Interior and contributed immensely to government services such as the improvement of education and the establishment of the centre for archaeology, the National Library and the Royal Academy. He had great men such as Coedés, who became the greatest authority on Southeast Asia, Fournereau the archaeologist and Lajonquiere, working for him. He was constantly in close contact with neighbouring countries in order to exchange ideas with them and bring new ideas back to his country to help with his research. Thus, it was hardly surprising why he was known by everyone as the father of modern Thai history.

He wrote mostly about the history of Thailand which provided a wealthy centre of information for past generations to learn from. He would sometimes jot down stories that he had remembered from the past or even some of his fond memories in a notebook. The books which he had written included "The Burmese Wars", "The Royal Autograph Edition of Thai History", "Naresuan the Great", "The Private Voyage of King Chulalongkorn", "Correspondences with Prince Naris", "Old Tales", "Old Memories" and "The Tales of Vetal" (based on the life of the Indian King Vikrama).

Chao Phya Dharmasakti or Krutep (1876-1943)

Since Chao Phya Dharmasakti was more of an educator and a thinker, he wrote more about education. He wrote a series of books that also taught its readers about morals. These books were called "Dhamma Chariya". He also worked on a number of books on mathematics and logistics, he wrote plays in prose such as "The

New Waiter”, “The Good Cook”, “Engagement”, “Tah Ngoh” and also did several short stories. He was also well-known for his sports team cheers called “Krao Kila”.

The story of Mother Perng

This is a short story written in 1901 about a widow from the rustic province of Buriram. One day she came down to Bangkok in order to see Dr. Suk who was a friend of her husband’s for his advice on what to do with her money. Dr. Suk suggested that she buy some gold, since she was sure to make profit out of it when the price rose. She followed Dr. Suk’s suggestion and bought some gold. After sometime, she became very impatient because the price of gold had not risen ever since she bought them and complained bitterly to Dr. Suk for having given her the wrong advice. In order to be rid of her, Dr. Suk decided to buy her gold at the price in which she had bought them. A few days after that, the price suddenly rose significantly, causing Mother Perng to come back to Dr. Suk to ask to buy her gold back at the original price. When Dr. Suk rejected the proposal. Quite naturally, Mother Perng started a bitter argument with him.

Phya Sri-Sunthorn Voharn (Phan Salak) was chief of the Royal Scribes and wrote a story in verse which was based on the old classical form of writing called “Ilarat”. The story was taken from a tale that was found in Indian literature where Ilarat went into the forbidden garden of Shiva and was cursed to become a woman for one month and a man for another month intermittently.

When he went for a swim in the pond one day, a hermit found him and took him back to his wife where they both decided to keep him. The hermit knew that he was cursed and kept him as his companion until he became a man again. When he became a woman, he made him his wife and Ilarat later bore him a child. When Ilarat became a man again, the hermit invited other hermits to come along and perform a ceremony to appease Shiva. Ilarat was at last forgiven by the almighty god and returned to his country with his son.

The late classicists

Under this category, there are four more names which should be mentioned since their works were based on the classical style. These writers were mostly inspired by Indian culture because they had been trained in temples in Pali and Sanskrit languages. Because of this, they do not understand nor read western literature as their imagination was still imbued with the images of gods, hermits and men with supernatural powers capable of performing things ordinary men could not. They are called late classicists because they stayed on until the eighth reign, the time when European influence had already begun to seep into Thailand. By then, students who had been educated abroad had started to bring western influences back home and differences can be seen in translation work or an abundance of prose work being produced.

The classicists who lingered on into the modern age included Phya Upakit, Phra Saraprasert and his collaborator, Phya Anumarn Rajadhon and Nai Chit Buratat. Of these four, Phya Anumarn had already emerged into the modern age although he still collaborated

with the Sanskrit professor, Phra Saraprasert and together used the pen names Sathienkoset and Nakapratip. Phya Anumarn, however, seemed to have been the most enlightened one because he had read both western and Thai books so voraciously as well as did heavy research work on Thai customs, traditions, ceremonies, philosophies, folklore and anthropology. He was therefore no doubt the master of Thai traditions and customs in those days. He also translated western literature into Thai and wrote novels. The most famous one he wrote with Phra Saraprasert was called “Kamanita”, a story based on a Buddhist Jataka of the Mahayana sect. Unfortunately the name was later changed to Vasitthi because the Minister of Education of the time thought the word Kamanita to be a sexual connotation.

Phya Upakit (1879-1941) or Nim Kanchanachiva

Phya Upakit was educated in the ancient traditional style, that is, with a firm religious background where he studied the Pali language as a monk in a monastery. He also grew up to become a teacher himself throughout his life and was devoted to teaching philology, versification and grammar. Apart from the series of books on grammar and versification which he wrote, he also did poetic stories such as the “Mahabharata” and “Anthology of Poems”. He was also one of the Royal Academy’s committee members responsible for the standardisation and editing of the official Thai dictionary which codified Thai spellings.

Phra Saraprasert or Nakrapratip (1889-1945)

Phra Saraprasert was also educated in the traditionally religious way, but also had the advantage of knowing Sanskrit and Singhalese in addition to Pali. His knowledge on classical languages was why he was known to be extremely meticulous in the choice of words he used. He also played a part in editing the Thai Dictionary of the Royal Academy and perhaps was the one who contributed most towards the completion of its first edition in 1937 which he wrote with Phya Anumarn Rajadhon. Phra Saraprasert would edit Phya Anumarn's translations and it was said that he would think for hours to find the right translation. Because of this thoroughness, the book "Kamanita", translated into German and English, was considered to be the masterpiece of Thai literature. He also wrote and translated Hitopatesa, Totsa-Montri, Arabian Nights, Bengalese Tales, Kathasritasagara, Pancha, Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare and Stories of Vikrama.

Phya Anumarn Rajadhon or Sathienkoset (1888-1970)

Phya Anumarn was a self-educated man who was a prolific reader of books of all sorts. He was first an official in the Customs Department and was later appointed head of the Fine Arts Department. He wrote (or rather translated) the famous "Kamanita" in conjunction with Phra Saraprasert, as well as many articles on religious matters, Thai customs, linguistics, literature, history, folklore and short stories.

He was on the committee for editing the Dictionary of the

Royal Academy and was the chief editor of the Royal Thai Encyclopedia Academy. This mammoth project was sometimes compared to the Britannica because it came in several volumes.

Apart from Anumarn Rajadhon, a few more names connected with him which could be mentioned are Dhanit Yupoh, who succeeded him in the Fine Arts Department and wrote principally on Thai dramatic arts and Luang Boribarn and Tri Amatyakul who both wrote about Thai archaeology. These three have helped to broaden the scope of knowledge on the subject concerned. In addition, M.C. Subhadradis Diskul can also be mentioned as he wrote on Thai archaeology and Thai art.

Chit Buratat (1892-1942)

Chit Buratat was principally a poet who had also worked as a journalist in several newspapers, principally "Srikrung" and "Pimthai". He contributed his poems to these publications. His only vice in life, however, was drinking, a habit which enabled him to write more naturally and easily. He was perhaps the greatest poet of the modern times and was known by his greatest work "Samaggi-bhet" which told the story of the disruption of a country which was the result of a lack of cooperation. This story was based on a Buddhist tale.

The modern form of writing

From the above, it is noticeable that western influence had gradually begun to play an important role in the evolution of Thai literature. Western impact slowly overshadowed classical Indian

influence where the venting of imagination through poetry was replaced by prose, the style fast becoming in vogue. Writers became more realistic in presenting their work and used prose rather than poetry, the latter tending to be more long-winded and tiresome. King Mongkut started to learn English and King Chulalongkorn, who was educated in the west, began to send his children and sons of nobles to Europe towards the turn of the last century for their education. These people came back at the beginning of this century together with western influences which were exercised on everything from education to literature. Some of the literature of this period became highly popular for people found that modern stories written in prose were much easier to read and appreciate. They soon abandoned classical poetry books on the whole as they were rather slow, clumsy in terms of expression and they were also difficult to understand at times because of the complicated vocabularies used. Thus, classical poetry became more active in schools while prose thrived among the more modern public. Because of this change, new words were coined in order to suit with the situation of modern day technology. Most prominent among the coiners of modern words was Prince Wan Waidhyakorn, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, former assistant Prime Minister, President of the Royal Thai Academy as well as Chairman of the Committee for the edition of the Thai Dictionary. In his capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he coined words for use in treaties, conventions and international agreements. Through his initiatives, many committees were set up for the coining of technical terms on various branches of knowledge namely geography, science, statistics, edu-

cation, psychology, economics, politics, etc. where he played an active part in three of the committees. Modern Thai writing was adapted to western expression in all spheres of activities while various newspapers also contributed to the enrichment of Thai expressions, so much so that many words and modern expressions became part of the language.

Since writing was no longer looked down upon as a profession, writers were no longer poor. And ever since the introduction of printing by Bradley and King Mongkut, books became more widespread across the country. This, combined with the introduction of the modern system of education by King Chulalongkorn, the enforcement of compulsory education and the introduction of university education by King Vajiravudh or the sponsorship of Thai writers by Rama VI, gave rise to a larger number of writers as well as readers. The writers earned their living by writing for newspapers and publishers.

Modern Plays

Plays and play-acting underwent a significant change while Thailand was under the government of Marshal Pibul Songgram who conceived the idea of preserving and promoting Thai art and culture by setting up the Fine Arts Department. Ever since one of its chiefs, Luang Vichit Vadakarn, who wrote many plays and set them to music himself, became active in the world of writing, Thai plays became evidently modernised. The lines were spoken or sung, there were more fast-paced actions where scenes changed just as quickly, modern lighting effects were installed on stage, much more atten-

tion was given to costumes and the accompanying music no longer dragged along tediously. In fact, the actions even managed to evoke a feeling of surprise from the audience.

Luang Vichit Vadakarn (1898-1962)

Luang Vichit Vadakarn was a diplomat and a great writer in the modern age who wrote voluminously. He was self-educated, worked hard and was very patriotic, as can be surmised from studying his writings. He served under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a long time and went to foreign countries where he had the chance to learn English and French and voraciously read their literature books. His started off as a translator and rose to become a Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State in charge of the Prime Minister's Office. His chief interest was in Thai history where he later wrote the largest set of history books ever to have been done by anybody in Thailand. His unwaning energy was what made him complete books specifically on history in 12 volumes and another 6 volumes on the religions of the world. He also wrote novels, short stories, memoirs on politics, sociology, psychology, economics, finance, grammar etc., wrote 24 plays for the national theatre and 36 plays for broadcasting including the music for them. Although he was not a professional musician, he was able to compose songs by hitting the keyboards on the piano until he found the right notes for his composition. Some of his books included "The Eight Branches of Knowledge", "Superman", "Brain", "Dream", "Buddhist Power", "Mental Power" and "Yogiism", "Heaven has not forsaken Me", "Champasak Heavenly Flower", "Moulmein

Rose", "Setting Sun", "The Sky of Salween", "Narai's Diamond", "Princess Karnika", "The Throne of Chiengrung", "Sacrificed for the Lover" and "Deserted Field-Field of Love". There were altogether 537 books published after his death, as well as several articles and tales. They all spoke well of his productivity.

The Blood of Suparn

The most famous of his plays was called "The Blood of Suparn" where he made a hero out of a real life enemy in the play. During the perennial wars between Thailand and Burma, the town of Suparnburi was finally taken over by the Burmese army. The commander-in-chief of the Burmese army had a son called Mangrai who was the army's young captain. The Burmese had assembled the townspeople together in order to assign chores for them to do where they were treated very badly by the soldiers. Among the Thai villagers, there was Father Duang, Mother Chan and their daughter Duangchan. Father Duang, an old man forced to toil himself away in the fields, was exhausted and asked his daughter for some water. When she brought some over to him in a glass, a Burmese soldier snatched it from her and used the water to wash his feet. Because he was parched, Father Duang had to drink from the pool of dirt the soldier stood on, to quench his thirst. Mangrai could not bear to see this cruelty and told the soldier that though they were conquerors, they ought to know how to treat their captives with respect, for soldiers were men of honour and not savage plunderers. While some of them listened to him, Mangrato told Mangrai that he had no right to give orders to him since they were of equal

rank. They began to argue and pulled out their swords. When Mangrato was wounded, he ran away to hide in the nearby forest. In the meantime, Mangrai had seen the beautiful Duangchan and had admired her conscientiousness. Out of sympathy, he encouraged her to run away with her parents when nobody was watching. Duangchan told him that either she goes with all of her people or she does not go at all for it would not be right for her to leave her compatriots behind. In the end, Mangrai agreed to this, but Mangrato had been looking on them all this time and quickly went to tell his commander what he had witnessed. Angry, the commander made an announcement that if he found out who accommodated the escape of the captives, that person shall be killed. But when he discovered that it had been his own son, he was not able to go back on his words. Some officers tried to help him by saying that Mangrato's cruelty had driven him to his actions, but the commander could not go back on his words as his son had behaved against the principle of justice and the honour of the army. He was to be put to death no matter what. When the soldiers took away Mangrai to his place of execution, Duangchan turned up and said that she had been the cause of all this and that she ought to be put to death instead. But her pleas fell on deaf ears and the army commander sent her away. She told herself that if she could not redeem Mangrai's mistake, then she will fight against the Burmese army herself. When she returned home, she was even more enraged to find her parents killed by Mangrai's friends as an act of revenge. She incited everybody to take up whatever arms they could find and help drive out the Burmese army. But because of their disadvantage in men and in weap-

ons, they lost their battle.

The play was accompanied by a series of beautiful songs, especially the duet by the hero and heroine during one of their trysts where Mangrai compared her to the moon, whose beauty was incomparably divine. She then replied, "Pray, do not flatter me, I am just a dark moon overshadowed by the clouds." The hero then continued, "But when the skies have cleared up, this moon will shine ever more brightly than the sky. If the moon did not look down upon him, then he shall lose hope." She then replied, "Why do you wish for such an unworthy woman?" He then said, "I love Duangchan dearly, but I still have a task to accomplish, otherwise my mind shall not be at peace". She then quickly assumed, "At peace with someone you've left behind, no doubt." He wronged her and said, "I am hoping to leave my life back in Suparn and not until I have done what needs to be done, will I come back to you and never return home."

The Department of Fine Arts is still continuing to produce plays for the National Theatre, the opposite number of the French Opera in Paris, but none so far has risen to same level of popularity of Luang Vichit Vadakarn's plays. However, the old traditional form of singing plays with actors in traditional dresses about court life still existed and were normally acted out in front of the public during temple fairs or to those who wished to appease the gods as a result of their sicknesses or misfortunes. There are various private groups who still wandered about town giving these performances. A theatre in Bangkok at Banglampoo also had these kinds of traditional performances which could also be commissioned for temple

fairs. This old form of acting is called Likay or Yeekay and was very popular among those in provincial areas.

The modern novel

At the start of the century, translations of English novels such as Rider Haggard's "She", "King Solomon's Mine", the work of Sherlock Holmes and many other detective stories as appeared in the magazine of Mr K.S.R. Kularb were available. K.S.R. Kularb lived a very active life for he was a prolific reader who wrote many books on general knowledge, although they were not always accurate.

The greatest translation work of the time was called "Vendetta" by Maria Corelli, translated in 1901 by "Mae Wan", Phya Surindraraja's pseudonym. It was very well accepted by the public.

The first original novel appeared in the thirties called "Yellow or White" by M.C. Akart-Damkerng. It was about a law student who fell in love with a woman in London, but because of racial discrimination existing in those days, he was not allowed to marry her. It was written more from his personal disappointment with love. He also wrote a much more popular novel called "Theatre of Life" which is a novel about a man who travelled around the world and what he had seen. Thai novels soon had a character and originality of its own and became popular among the Thais, setting examples for other novelists. Unfortunately, the author was overcome by his own spiritual despondency and drowned himself in the Bay of Hong Kong during one of his journeys, depriving us of his great

writings.

The period that ensued was resplendent with novelists of great merit, both men and women alike. There were novels by Dokmaisod (pseudonym of a female writer called M.L. Busba-Nimmanhemindra, nee Kunjara 1905-1960), "One in a Hundred", "Luang Naruebarl", "Nij" etc. which discussed life in a Thai family and was written so vividly that many readers, especially those in their teenage and middleage years, were impressed by it.

Then a book called "Peking, the City of My Past" was published, which was a love story written from the author's own experience which had a touch of Chinese influence woven into it. The author was Sod Kuramarohid, a student sponsored by the Ministry of Education to study in Peking. He came back to work in the Ministry of Education after his graduation where he supervised in private Chinese schools for sometime, but later retired so that he could devote himself entirely to journalism. Another popular novel which he wrote was called "Our Piece of Land". His wife Nian was also a writer of great merit who translated ancient Chinese novels.

There is another well-loved book called "Nitra Sayan", a sentimental love story written by Ing-On with the theme of immortal love that struck the readers' emotions.

There was also a lengthy story about the adventures in love and war of a Burmese conqueror called "The Conqueror in Ten Directions" which was a long novel based on the Burmese hero, Bayinnaung, written by Chote Praepan.

Kukrit Pramoj, who ran "Siam Rath" newspaper, also gained many fans through his criticisms written on page 5 of the paper for

he had a sharp tongue, acute wits to match and had an answer for almost every question. People read and adored his work because of his political inclinations and criticisms on the social order. By reading about his ideas on how to face with different problems, they were momentarily released from stress. He also wrote a number of books which later became very famous, two of which were "Red Bamboo" and "The Four Reigns".

There were various organisations that offered prizes to writers of the best books of the year, giving prominence to several writers. SEATO was one such organisation in Bangkok as well as UNESCO, The Bangkok Post, Bangkok Bank and the Library Association of Thailand. Kanchana Nakananta won the UNESCO prize in 1968 with her book entitled "The Wide World" while Botan (or Subha Ruesiri), Suvarnee and Krishna Asokesin won the SEATO prizes. Sifah won the Library Association's prize in 1972 with her book entitled "Circle of Life", whose heroine lived more for honour than money.

Botan won the SEATO prize in 1971 with "Letters from China". The SEATO prize in 1972 was won by Suvarnee with "His name was Karn" which was about a village doctor who tried to perform good deeds and held on religiously to his dogmatic principles to find out later that his way of life was rather thwarted and filled with frustration. She also wrote "Will the Sea be Full" and "My Beloved Son" which were stories concerning youth problems in the modern days.

Krishna Asokesin once won the prize from SEATO with "The Boat of Men" which was about life in a family where various

members followed their own decisions, personal vices and fate. In 1973 she won another prize for "The Sunset". She also wrote many other books on modern social problems such as "The Chief Wife" and "Water Seeping Through Sand", etc.

There are many other notable contemporary writers who could also be mentioned here such as Tamayanti, Kanok Lekha, Laksanavadi, Nit Tongsopit, Santa Devarak, Nitya Natya Sunthorn, Pracha Punvivat, Orawan and V. na Pramuanmark. V. na Pramuanmark who wrote a famous novel called "Prisna" which was translated into English.

Kanchana Nakananta who won the Unesco prize in 1968 with her "The Wide World" came from a family background of teachers and she herself was one too. Her real name is Mrs. Nongchai Parinyatawat (born Nakamadi), (1921-) and she was educated in Chaiyapum which was also her birthplace. She was sent to pursue her studies in Bangkok where she got a diploma and a bachelor of law in 1950 to become a teacher. Due to a serious illness, she retired from teaching in 1961 and went to live at her farm near Chantaburi where she devoted herself entirely to writing. The book which made her famous was "Village Chief Lee and Mrs. Mah", a novel based on the interplay of peasant life and the modern ideas of a girl from the capital. The two opposing ideals were reconciled with the happy marriage between the pair. The book was put on the syllabus of Kasetsart University.

"The Wide World" which won her the UNESCO prize told the story of four children and the untimely deaths of their parents which forced them to struggle through life on their own. The eldest

of them believed that the world was huge and therefore had many prospects for them. Not losing hope, he took his brothers and sisters into the forest where they helped each other clear out and cultivate a piece of land that soon prospered.

Her other novel which became very popular and was made into a film was "My Beloved Captain". It was a romantic comedy about a woman doctor and a captain in the army who were sent one of the army recruits to be their driver. This driver, in fact, holds a bachelor of law, and therefore refused to indulge himself in corrupt ways such as buying his way out of conscription. Instead, he chose to become a soldier at his own free will and soon found that his new mistress and her father were extreme misers. His generosity finally won over the esteem of the household as well as for the love of his mistress.

There are many great names in the world of writing but the list would run too long if one were to mention them all and perhaps more names which have yet to be discovered. We should not, however, forget two Magsaysay Awards winners, famous journalist Miss Nilawan Pinthong and Prayoon Chanyawong, a well-known caricaturist-artist for newspapers.

Dictionaries

The task of writing dictionaries is a field set out on its own because it requires somebody who really understands English to work on it. The first Thai dictionary, translated into French and English by Pallegoix during the fourth reign, was published in Paris in 1854. P.B. Bradley then went on to complete a second dictionary

in 1873. The first English-Thai dictionary was made by McFarland in 1883 which became very popular but sales dropped when M.L. Manich Jumsai's English-Thai dictionary came out in 1937. In the meantime, B.O. Cartwright had also written a Thai-English dictionary in 1907 followed by George Bradley McFarland's in 1941.

There was also a dictionary of phrases by So Sethaputra which appeared in four volumes in 1940, the same time Manich's English-Thai dictionary was published.

The success of Manich's first pocket-sized English-Thai dictionary led other people to compete with him along the same lines. Though many of these did not survive, among the ones that did included those by Kamol Bhaopichitra and Witt Siwasariyanon. There was also another dictionary written in the USA by Mary R. Haas which was edited in 1964.

Pallegoix also did a Thai-French dictionary while the French-Thai dictionary was completed by M.J. Cuaz in 1903. There was also another one by M.E. Lunet de Lajonquiere which came out in 1904, a French-Thai dictionary by Phra Riem Virajbhakaya in 1925 and M.L. Manich Jumsai in 1937.

The first German-Thai dictionary was completed in 1937 by M.L. Manich Jumsai and was published by the Ministry of Education at Sat Sangvej Press.

There was also a dictionary for the Chiangmai dialect called the "English-Laos dictionary" which was completed by D.G. Collins in Chiangmai in 1906. As for the French-Lao dictionary, the first one was compiled by M.J. Cuaz and was published in Hong Kong in 1904.

The dictionary for the Thai language will be discussed separately in a section concerning the Royal Thai Academy.

The Royal Thai Academy

Prince Damrong had thought of establishing the Royal Academy in 1931, when a coup d'état occurred the year after that and forced him to abandon the idea. It was not until 1934 that Prime Minister Pibul Songgram revived the idea and set up the Royal Academy as an independent body under the Prime Minister. Prince Wan Waidyakorn was appointed as President while various other committees were appointed to different tasks. Only a few of them, however, survived the fall of Pibul Songgram's cabinet. The academy set out to produce a dictionary of Thai words, thus standardising Thai spelling and the use of vocabulary. The dictionary was completed in 1950. The academy also coined words for use in different branches of knowledge such as geography, science, mathematics, statistics, social sciences, psychology and economics. Another one of the academy's tasks was to edit the Thai encyclopedia where an editorial board was set up with Phya Anumarn Rajadhon as Chief Editor. By 1973, the committee had already been able to publish 9 volumes, but it took many more years after that before the entire set was allowed to be distributed. When Phya Anumarn passed away, he was succeeded by Nai Chote Suvatthi, an expert in physiology.

Newspapers.

Newspapers gradually developed into a gigantic force from

its humble beginning just over a hundred years ago when Dr. Bradley founded the first English paper in Bangkok in 1864. King Mongkut, who himself loved writing, also contributed articles to this newspaper. He later started up a printing house in the Grand Palace and founded the Royal Gazette for his officials to read news concerning the palace. The Royal Gazette began in 1857 and it was during the fourth reign that it was nationally distributed. Dr. Samuel John Smith then produced two English papers in 1868, the "Siam Weekly Advertiser" and the "Siam Repository". Since there were foreigners working for these papers, it sometimes caused great annoyance to the Thais when the Thai government was unjustly criticised, but there was nothing they could do about it because of their special privileges and their state of jurisdiction of their own consuls. Sometimes they caused embarrassment by presenting the King with a conflict to resolve, but he would be obliged to tell them that since the editors were not under his jurisdiction, there was nothing he could do to help. In 1874, during the fifth reign, a Thai newspaper called "Darunovadha", edited by Prince Kashemsan in his own residence, was founded. Published once a week, the newspaper informed its readers about the happenings in the city and in the country as well as provided material for general knowledge. The first Thai daily paper was founded in 1874 by Prince Bhanurangsi but folded only after a year since the Prince and his partners did not have enough time to look after it. In 1897, K.S.R. Kularb, a man who had travelled extensively and who had encyclopedic knowledge, founded his own paper for which he wrote extraordinary stories which gave readers insight into something they

had never known before. He wrote, for example, about Sunthorn Bhoo, the famous poet and about how he was the son of Khun Sri Sangharn who lived behind the fort of Wang Lang. He learned how to read Thai at Wat Thai Talat and used to be the second King, Phra Pinklao's mentor. After he left the monkhood, he served under King Rama II and was given the title of Khun Sunthorn. Being the King's favourite servant, he was given a government house at Tacharng as a gift. During the reign of King Rama III, however, he was suddenly dismissed from court because he mocked his father with his own poems and shouted at him over his head. The King was therefore not able to accept the services of such a person in his palace, drove him away from his house and gave it to Phya Raj-Montri.

King Rama VI patroned the Daily Thai Newspaper which appeared in 1908 while he was still the Crown Prince. He often wrote for the newspaper and campaigned against the Germans when he declared war against the Axis powers during World War I through the papers.

King Rama VI himself edited a newspaper called "Dusit Samit" which came out irregularly as he would work on it whenever he pleased.

The first political newspaper called "Bangkok Karnmuang" appeared in 1923 which lasted only eight years followed by two newspapers called "The Iron Armour" in 1923 and "The Young Thai" in that same year, both of which folded. The "Prachachart" was founded in 1932 and was run by a famous Prince politician, WanWaidhyakorn. This paper earned its success partly due to the public's credibility in him. However, the newspaper was forced to

close down a few times by the government under Phya Manopakorn. Great journalists were trained by this prince who nourished their minds with innovative ideas on journalism. The moment just after the coup d'état in 1932 was not conducive for freedom of the press, causing a lot of newspapers of the time to close down at their own will or were forced to close down.

Another distinguished person who was a famous writer, Prince Bidhyalongkorn, started up the *Pramuan Wan*, the *Pramuan Mark* and *Pramuan Sarn* in 1935 at his own home when he retired from his services and devoted himself to journalism. He collaborated with another famous writer Phya Sarasart, whose signature was S.S. where they worked together until the press was destroyed by Allies' bombs during World War II.

There were other newspapers which followed after by founders such as Siao Hud Seng, Head of the Sibunruang family, who started *Siam Chino Varsap*. This man was a very influential character since he was a great friend of Sun Yat Sen whose other name was Louis Kirivat. He fought for justice and made a name for himself and was soon involved in politics that he was accused of brewing a rebellion. He was eventually banished to the island of Tarutao along with his friend, another strongheaded politician and journalist Phya Sarabhai. One of the big affairs Louis Kiriwat managed to unearth through his newspaper was a murder case which the police identified as suicide. In fact, the woman had been forced into prostitution and because she resisted, she was killed by the police. Louis at last revoked the decision and had the guilty man executed.

Newspapers became more involved in politics and tried to represent cases to the public which did not always please the government. As a result, they were either asked to be closed down or many of its editors were put in jail. Such cases happened more and more frequently but the journalists were determined to fight it because they believed informing the public to be their right and that freedom of the press should be respected wherever justice is to be found. Newspapers were considered the country's fourth estate.

Another famous name was Chote Praepan, the author of "The Conqueror in Ten Directions" which was one of the most popular novels. He came to work with "Siam Nikorn" under the famous editor Kularb Saipradit. With Praepan, the Siam Nikorn was extremely successful.

Another famous author who worked for the newspaper called "Prachamit-Suparb Burut" was Malai Chupinit who worked during difficult times during the war when Bangkok was being bombed heavily.

By this time, so many papers had been founded but were closed down. For the first time in 1965, these papers came together and formed an association of the press and elected Chalerm Wuddhikosit to act as its President. Chalerm had a newspaper called Samarnmit Bantoeng and another one called Chalermvuddhi.

Since great politicians usually highlighted their political ideas through newspapers, everyone knew that General Phao Sriyanonda had Chaotai and Marshal Sarit had the "Sarnseri" newspaper as their voicebox. Phao Sriyanonda was Chief of the police and had prospects of becoming the next Prime Minister. One day

he asked the famous author Sod Kuramarohid to write an article for him but Sod instead wrote "Century of Fight" which scorns the police and its vices. Phao was unable to do anything about it and had to allow him to publish the article to avoid complications. Sod was another man who believed in his own ideas and could never be persuaded to change them.

The editor of "Pimthai" who was shot dead was called Ari Livira because he always criticised the government strongly. One day when he went to the beach with his newly-wed wife, he was approached by a group of people, one of whom was a police, and was shot to death. The scandal was kept quiet for sometime but was later dug up and the culprits were suitably sentenced. This was perhaps the gravest case in the history of Thai newspapers.

Today we have so many papers and magazines that serve the public in so many ways that newspapers have become very popular. Some of the ones with a grand circulation are Pimthai, Siam Rath, Siam Nikorn, Thairat and the Daily News. There are three English language dailies, The Bangkok World, The Bangkok Post and The Nation as well as many Chinese newspapers, of which the most popular was Sengsian Yiapao.

It was also a fashion at that time, for people of the learned society or from institutions, to write their own journals discussing their subject of interest or the results of their research. The most best known of these were the Siam Society Journal, the Journal of Fine Arts Department, the Teacher's Institute of Journals, the Journal of Archaeology, the Journal for Agriculture, the Journal for Forestry, the Medical News and Senasuksa. There was also a large

number of privately owned magazines which were sometimes political and sometimes entertaining, with novels and short stories and cartoons for the readership of children.

This was an age when writing became a fruitful profession as a result of over sixty years of compulsory education in the country where about seven million children were in educational institutions. There were more readers than ever before.

Modern Period

Literature during the twentieth century became more modernised because all works were set to the standards of European writing. Instead of writing poetry in a fantasy world about heroes seeking for adventure, for example, poets became more realistic and showed obvious signs of foreign influence from both Chinese and European literature. Chinese influence first seeped into Thailand in the form of historical romance first and foremost by the translation of the “Three Kingdoms”. Then there was a series of other Chinese historical romances which was first completed in as early as during the reign of King Rama I. The first European novel to be translated into Thai was the “Vendetta” of Mairie Corelli by Mae Wan (Pen name of Phya Surintaraja) followed by the translation of other mystical stories such as “She” by Rider Haggard.

During the reign of King Rama V, students studied abroad in England as well as Germany and came back to translate work from English into Thai. The authors mostly translated detective stories written by the French Arsene Lupin, Maurice Leblanc and adventure stories by Alexandre Dumas.

Thai authors then wrote their own European stories and avoided the traditional poetic style about a hero who learns magic with a hermit who lives deep in the forest and who goes on to face all sorts of danger at sea and in the woods. Instead, they started to write Thai imaginative novels in the narrative style. The first to start this trend was a group of women which included Wanna Pramuan Mark, G. Surangkanang, Dok Mai Sot (M.L. Bupha), Riam Eng, Tommayanti and Krisna Asokesin, etc. These women stuck to writing more realistic stories. The most famous of these was by M.C. Arkart Damkerng in the 1930's who wrote a realistic story called "The Yellow or the White Race" which was a reflection on his own life story when he fell in love with an English woman but was not allowed to marry her because of racial differences.

Realistic stories in prose style soon became popular which was written on historical backgrounds such as "The Four Reigns" by M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, the mysterious novel "The Black Silk" by Luang Sara Nuprapan, the history based novel "The Conqueror of the Ten Points of Compasses" by Jacob or books on foreign travel such as "Peking, City of Past Memories" by Sot Kumaralohit.

The Thai printing house was introduced to the country in the third reign by an American missionary called Dan Beach Bradley in 1836, and greatly increased the production of modern Thai novels. The "Story of the Thai Mission to London" by Mom Rajothai, for example, were real life adventure stories experienced by princes. And because they were sold at such cheap price, a quarter of a baht per copy, it became increasingly popular nationwide.

The sixth monarch of this dynasty who was also interested

in writing novels was the country's leader to modern literature. For the first time, Shakespeare's work were translated into poetic Thai. He also wrote many humorous stories such as "The Interpreter", who by his humorous temperament, interpreted everything told to him by a foreigner incorrectly and caused major problems. On the religious side of things, Phya Upakit Silpasarn and Phra Saraprasert wrote the famous story about Kamanit (under the pen names of Phya Anumarn Rajadon and Phra Saraprasert) in 1930. The most famous stories written by Phya Anumarn Rajadhon were the ones on Thai culture.

Foreign (especially American) movies were introduced to Thailand in the 30's which in turn greatly encouraged Thai authors to write about adventures in Thai.

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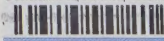


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